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FERGUS OF THE FLAIL;

OR,

Fighting for Land and Life.

BY CORPORAL MORGAN RATTLER.



"A parley there, Colonel Johnson," cried Dwyer, approaching the window, while he also held a wounded soldier before him.

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FERGUS OF THE FLAIL

—OR—

FIGHTING FOR LAND AND LIFE.

By CORPORAL MORGAN RATTLER,

Author of "Gerald O'Grady's Grit; or, The Branded Irish Lad," "The Little Black Rover," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

ENTERING THE LION'S DEN—SPITFIRE MILES IN A SCRAPE—A TRYING MOMENT—FERGUS FLINGS ASIDE THE MASK.

"GOOD-MORROW to you, Fergus, and how is every inch of you?"

"Brave and hearty, Mr. Dwyer; and how does the world use you?"

"Only poorly, me boy. My curses light on the villains of soldiers! Whisper a minute."

"What is it, sir? I see you've got a lot of them inside now."

"Yes, indeed; the devil take them! Did you see me brother Michael to-day while ye were up on the mountain?"

"Surely, Mr. Dwyer."

"I hope he won't venture down here, for the villains are after him."

"Then let them, sir. You may rely on it, he's able 'for them. Come in, Miles, and try a drink."

"For Heaven's sake, me lads, don't provoke the soldiers," cautioned the landlord.

"Never fear, sir; if they don't bother us, we won't trouble them. Come on, Miles, and don't fear."

"Is it me afraid of the sogers, Fergus? The devil fire me if I care for all the Hessians in Ireland, or out of it, aither."

"Don't talk so loud, Miles, or they'll hear you," cautioned the landlord of the inn.

"Then, let them, Mr. Dwyer, for 'tis the truth I'm telling."

"The truth isn't best to be spoken in Ireland these days, Miles, me boy," again cautioned the landlord, as he cast a frowning glance at the noisy soldiers inside. "More than one brave fellow has supped sorrow of late for speaking his mind. Come in, at all events, and try to keep a civil tongue in your head."

And the cautious landlord led the way into the tap-room, followed by the two young men whom he had met outside the door.

James Dwyer's public house was situated on the highway near a pleasant village, in the county of Wexford, Ireland.

Wexford, Ireland!

Oh, what scenes of heroic daring and devotion those words recall to the mind of the student of Irish history.

We are writing of the year 'Ninety-eight, when the men of that gallant county were up in arms against their English oppressors; when the half-armed peasants encountered the disciplined troops on many a bloody battle field, to hurl them back in disorder and dismay; and when fierce onslaughts and hard blows—and not words and petitions—were the order of the day.

James Dwyer was a man in the prime of life—tall and stalwart, with a pleasant face and a kindly voice, as becomes the landlord of an inn.

The young man whom he addressed as Fergus was the son of a well-to-do farmer in the neighborhood, and Fergus O'Farrell was noted far and near as a leader in all sports

and pastimes indulged in by the young people.

There was not a young man in the neighborhood who could cast the heavy stone as far as Fergus; he had not his match in taking the "hop, step, and a jump;" he could run like a deer; and he would dance from morn till night without tiring.

Fergus O'Farrell was tall, and straight as a lance, with long, sinewy arms and broad shoulders, while his every word and action told of the manly spirit that throbbed in his breast.

The girls of the neighborhood were wont to say that he was the "best looking and best behaved boy in the county."

The lads were unanimous in declaring that Fergus was "the best-natured fellow in the whole wide world."

Fergus O'Farrell was just twenty on the day when we see him entering the inn; and up to that time he was never known to raise his hand, or even his voice, in anger.

Very different indeed was his boon companion, Miles Tracy—Spitfire Miles, as he was called by his acquaintances when his back was turned.

Miles Tracy was of medium stature, but he looked like a dwarf when standing beside his tall friend Fergus.

He had a crooked back; his legs were as crooked as a "ram's horn;" his face was repulsive to look at; his voice was harsh and cracked; and he was eternally giving vent to his temper by uttering unpleasant remarks and sarcasms about his acquaintances.

And Miles Tracy was as quick with the hard blow as he was with the bitter word.

He was never known to speak a kindly word to any living being except Fergus O'Farrell; and it was the universal opinion that Fergus "could trample on him" without the other resisting the insult.

The cross fellow followed Fergus night and day, like a faithful dog, and woe be to him who would dare offer blow or insult to the young farmer while Miles was present.

Miles Tracy was an orphan—at least, he never knew his parents.

Twenty years before the opening of our history, a young woman sought shelter from the night at Farmer O'Farrell's house.

The young woman was well dressed, as was an infant she held in her arms.

The hospitable farmer and his wife received her with open arms, furnished her with a good supper and a comfortable bed, and bade her remain as long as she pleased.

Before daybreak the following morning, the stranger stole away from the farmhouse, leaving her infant sleeping in bed.

That young woman was never seen in the neighborhood again.

Her child was tended to and cared for by Mrs. O'Farrell, and he never left that hospitable house—never knew what it was to want a home and kind friends.

The woman said her name was Tracy, and that her child was christened Miles, and the abandoned boy was ever after called Miles Tracy.

Fergus and Miles slept in the same little bed during childhood; they went to the same school; they roamed and played together when lads; and they were inseparable when verging on manhood.

Fergus O'Farrell entered the tap-room without paying the slightest attention to the English soldiers who were carousing there.

Spitfire Miles, wearing a dark scowl on his ugly face, regarded them with looks of hatred as he passed up to the bar.

"I say, Bill," cried the sergeant of the troop to a companion, as he regarded Fergus with an admiring eye, "wouldn't that lad make a fine trooper?"

"That he would, Jack," responded the soldier addressed. "Slip him the shilling and make him join us. Try him, old fellow."

"By George, but I will; and I'll make him join us!" cried the sergeant, rising from his seat and striding over to Fergus, who was in the act of lifting a pewter of ale from the bar.

"You're a likely lad," cried the English sergeant, surveying Fergus from head to foot. "Drink to King George and I'll pay the reckoning."

"Are you speaking to me, sergeant?" inquired Fergus, in humble tones.

"No, be Heavens, 'tis me he's talking to!" cried Miles, placing himself in front of his friend; "but may the good ale poison me if I drink to your toast, soldier."

"A rebel—treason!" cried the sergeant, seizing Miles by the collar. "Here, men, and pour the beer down his ugly throat. By God, Irishman, you'll drink the toast in blood!"

"Stop, sergeant—stand back, soldiers!" cried Fergus, as he seized Miles and dragged him away from the Englishman. "Don't you see that he does not know what he's saying? He's not right here."

Fergus spoke the last words to the sergeant in a low tone, as he pushed Miles back, and he tapped his own forehead at the same time.

"Will you drink to King George for him, then?" demanded the sergeant.

"Sergeant Dobbs," interposed the landlord, "I'd be making bold enough to ask you to leave the decent young man alone. Mr. O'Farrell is the son of a worthy man, and a friend of mine."

"You're all d—d rebels!" cried the sergeant, in the most insulting tones; "and blast my eyes if you mustn't all drink a health to King George. What say you, lads?"

The other soldiers sent up a shout of approval as they crowded around Fergus and his companion, clenching their hands as if ready to attack them on a signal from the sergeant.

Addressing Fergus, the sergeant demanded: "Will you drink the toast, lad, and then I have a proposition to make?"

"Let us hear the proposition first, sergeant," replied Fergus, in a calm voice. "Miles, don't you say a word at all."

"How would you like to be a soldier, young man?" inquired the sergeant.

"I'd like it very much, sir," replied Fergus.

"Then you're my man," cried the sergeant, in jubilant tones, as he grasped Fergus by the hand, while he drew a shilling from his pocket. "Take this, and we'll have a bumper all around, to the health of good King George."

Fergus O'Farrell shuddered as he looked at the silver coin in the sergeant's hand, and then, drawing back, he said:

"I'm not prepared to list to day, sergeant. I'd like to ask leave of my father."

"Ask leave of your grandmother," sneered the sergeant, while the others burst out with loud jeers. "I tell you there's no time like the present, lad. We'll have plenty of sport, hunting the rebels on the hills, burning their houses, and destroying the crops. Come, lad."

Miles Tracy was fairly boiling with rage while the soldier was thus addressing Fergus, and despite his friend's warning glances he could not hold in any longer.

Shaking his fist in the sergeant's face as he danced before him with rage the Spitfire yelled:

"The curses of God light on ye, ye cowardly murdering—"

"Hush, and stand back, Miles!" roared young Fergus, as he again flung his companion aside. "Sergeant, the boy is out of his mind."

"We'll soon put him out of the world!" cried the sergeant. "Lads, get a rope till we string up this d-d rebel. Seize your arms and cut them both down if they resist. Guard the doors!"

Obedying the orders of the sergeant the soldiers seized their weapons and closed around their intended victims before the latter could reach the door if they meditated retreat.

"Great God!" ejaculated the landlord, "the poor lads are lost!"

"Surrender, you dogs of rebels!" cried the sergeant, holding his sword at O'Farrell's breast, who had folded his arms and stood at the bar, confronted by the hounds who were thirsting for his blood.

"What have we done," demanded Fergus, in a clear manly voice, "that you should treat us in this way, sergeant?"

"Done!" was the brutal reply, "you are rebel dogs, and that's enough for us. By God, you'll both enlist with us in the king's army, or we'll hang you up on the nearest tree. Will you take the shilling?"

"To the devil with ye and yer shilling, ye murdering dogs!" cried Miles, dashing the pewter measure into the sergeant's face.

"Have at them, Fergus, if we died for it."

Down went the brawny sergeant as if struck by a bullet, and the next moment Spitfire Miles sprang forward and grabbed his sword.

"Lift a hand or a gun against us now, ye villains," he said, addressing the other assailants, while he held the weapon at the fallen man's throat, "and I'll make a corpse of this scoundrel."

"Hold your hand, Miles!" cried Fergus.

"Let him alone, Fergus," whispered the landlord into the young fellow's ear. "Do you want to save your lives?"

"To be sure, sir."

"The soldiers' guns aren't loaded, and there's a heavy flail on the rack above your head, my brave lad."

"I understand, sir," responded Fergus, as a fierce expression appeared in his eyes for the first time.

When the soldiers saw their sergeant lying on the ground, with the blood spurting from a cut on the forehead, their first impulse was to spring on the two lads and kill them then and there.

But Spitfire Miles was too quick for them, as he had the sword at the fallen man's throat on the instant.

The sergeant himself, staring up at his assailant, was the first to realize that he was within an inch of death.

With a motion of his hand, he ordered the others to draw back.

It was at this juncture that the landlord approached Fergus from behind, and whispered the suggestion into his ear.

With a sudden bound forward and upward, the active young fellow seized the heavy flail

and drew it from the rack; and then he was beside Miles the next moment.

But the action in seizing the flail was not more sudden than the extraordinary change that appeared on the countenance of Fergus O'Farrell.

The blue eyes, hitherto so mild and genial in their expression, were now fairly aglow with rage and indignation.

Every nerve and muscle in his frame appeared to be in full play and ready for action, and desperate action at that.

And then his voice, so mild and like a woman's before—now rang out like a trumpet blast, as he cried:

"Cut-throat villains!—hell-hounds of a tyrant king! I defy you to the death! If you have a spark of manhood in you, listen to what I have to offer you!"

"Will I finish this villain at once, Fergus," inquired Miles, "and then have at them?"

"No—o!" thundered Fergus.

"Listen to him, lads," cried the fallen sergeant. "By George, I see murder in this chap's eyes!"

"Right ye are," cried Miles. "Oh, 'tis I'm itching to send this sword into that big neck of yours. I'll hold ye a gallon of porter, landlord, I'll touch the juggler vein the first stab."

"Don't offer to commit murder, Miles!" thundered Fergus. "Hear me, you English dogs. There are five of you."

"And the sergeant makes six, but he doesn't count now," cried Miles.

"Hold your tongue, I say!" roared Fergus, as he glared at the five soldiers, who held their guns presented at the young man. "You watch them, Miles, and into his throat with the sword the first move they make against us. Now listen, you murdering dogs."

"What is it you propose, young man?" inquired the corporal, who was called Bill Belcher.

"I propose to fight the whole of you, man to man, one at a time," replied Fergus, proudly. "From this day forth, I swear death to every English soldier I meet."

The landlord saw at once, by the terrible expression on the young man's face, that something terrible had occurred to him, though Fergus had not appeared to be unusually excited when he entered the house.

"In God's name, Fergus," he inquired, "what ails you, man? What happened to you at all—at all?"

"I'll tell you, Mr. Dwyer, when I kill these dogs. I was afraid their guns were loaded, or I'd have at them the moment I came in. Now I mean to kill them one by one, and this flail will be my weapon. I can't be a murderer, even if they did hang my father—the fiends of hell!"

"They hang your father! Your father dead!" gasped the landlord.

"Ay, my father is dead, and my mother is a mad woman," fairly roared Fergus. "And here are his murderers."

CHAPTER II.

THE CHALLENGE—COLD STEEL AGAINST THE FLAIL—"WHOSE TURN NEXT?"—THE SPITFIRE STRIKES WITH A VENGEANCE.

The landlord, shocked and terrified at this announcement, endeavored to gain some particulars of the outrage, but the young man stopped the inquiries, crying:

"I have no patience to tell another word until I deal with these dogs. Listen to me, you infernal villains."

"What is it?" inquired Corporal Belcher, receiving a signal from the prostrate sergeant.

"I came here after you," commenced Fergus, in fierce tones, "intending to murder every one of you somehow or another, though I hadn't a weapon in the world but my two hands."

"Murder us, indeed," laughed the corporal as he fixed his bayonet on the gun. "If that wild fool hadn't our sergeant foul, I'd spit you with this bayonet. As it is—"

"As it is," interrupted Fergus, "I'm going to kill you man for man. Your turn first, corporal, if you please."

"What are you at?" cried the corporal, with a contemptuous grin.

"This is what I am at. You see this flail that I cut in two."

And Fergus severed the two heavy sticks by cutting the leather thongs.

Flinging the lighter of the two sticks aside, the young man flourished the other over his head, as he continued:

"There are six of you in all! I'll fight you man to man, one at a time. My flail against your gun and bayonet."

A shout of derision burst from the soldiers on hearing this challenge, and Corporal Bill Belcher cried:

"Come on, you mad Irish fool. We did hope to hang you up; but we'll do it after I run my bayonet through you."

And the corporal moved toward the door, presenting his weapon at the same time.

"Wait a moment, you hound," cried Fergus, as he turned to his young comrade. "Miles, remember what I tell you."

"Tell me to run the sword through this villain's neck, and you may be sure I won't forget it," replied the Spitfire.

"Do it, on the instant, if more than one leaves the house at the time, or if any of them offer to load their guns," said Fergus, moving to the door after the corporal.

"Fair play, lads," cried Sergeant Dobbs, who was in mortal terror of the sword in the Spitfire's hand.

"Fair play it must be, if you don't want to die on the instant," cried Miles. "Go on, Fergus, and kill the villains. Remember the burning house, your father's body dangling on the tree, and your poor mad mother crying under it. Strike for vengeance, my darling boy, and God prosper the cause of Ireland. Eternal damnation to all her enemies. Strike—strike, and with a vengeance, Fergus O'Farrell!"

"Don't fear, Miles," was the fierce rejoinder. "Into his throat with the sword if any of them offer to come out until I call them!"

And Fergus O'Farrell marched out of the door after the corporal.

The next moment he was standing in the yard before his opponent with the flail uplifted over his head, and ready and more than eager for the deadly encounter.

It was the first time in his life that young Fergus raised his hand against a human being.

God alone could tell whether it was to be his last encounter.

Corporal Bill Belcher was a stout, muscular fellow, who had served with the English Army against the French, and he was well accustomed to the use of the bayonet, which was then considered the most effective weapon in the service.

A grim smile passed over the Englishman's face as he stood before the stalwart lad who had the daring to oppose the dreaded bayonet with a sapling in his hand.

"Have you said your prayers, lad?" inquired the corporal, with a sneer, as he presented his weapon, making ready for the plunge at his young opponent.

"If you ever said a prayer in your life, say one now," cried Fergus, "and may God have mercy on you!"

As the young man uttered the last words he struck down the corporal's guard with a violent blow; and then, with a lightning-like movement, the tough flail descended on the doomed man's head, bearing him to the ground with great violence.

One groan of agony, a quivering of the stout limbs, and England had one soldier less to fight her battles—Ireland one foe less to encounter in the desperate campaign at hand.

A single glance at his dead foe caused Fergus O'Farrell to shudder for the moment; and then, pulling out his pocket knife he cut a niche on the fatal flail, as he cried aloud:

"I'll fill the flail before my father's blood will be avenged. Who's the next to come out to fight me?"

The four soldiers had watched the encounter from the window of the tavern, while the landlord had witnessed it from the doorway.

"Mercy above us," muttered Dwyer, "but Fergus is a giant all out. He floored the corporal as I would a rat in the barn. He'll kill the whole of them—more power to him."

"That fellow is a born devil," cried one of the soldiers, turning to the prostrate prisoner. "I say, sergeant, he's knocked Bill Belcher out of time. Let's all out at him, lads."

"Don't do it, I command you, men," cried the terrified sergeant, as he felt Miles' weapon prodding his neck. "This fool will murder me, I say. Dick Haywood, you out at him like a man. Thunders alive, what kind of soldiers are you to fear a single lad with only a stick for a weapon?"

Thus being appealed to Dick Haywood sallied out to the yard where Fergus still stood with flail uplifted, and with a vengeful smile on his handsome face.

The second English soldier was a tall fellow, with long and muscular arms, and with a pleasant, open countenance.

In his own island, Dick Haywood was noted for his skill with the stick, having been declared champion in many of the rustic encounters.

He was a brave soldier, a merry companion and his heart revolted at the scenes he was compelled to take a hand in when ordered out to pillage and burn the homes of those who were suspected of being devoted to unfortunate Ireland.

Dick stood looking at his young opponent for a moment, as he clasped his musket firmly, with the bayonet pointed toward Fergus, and then, as his honest face beamed with a smile, he cried:

"Blow my eyes, lad, if I'll use steel against you if thou hast killed poor Bill Belcher. I'll fight thee with your own weapon, like a man."

Into the house the soldier sprang, handed his gun to one of his companions, and seized the portion of the flail which Fergus had flung on the floor.

"You're a fool, Dick Haywood!" cried the sergeant, as the soldier sprang out to the encounter. "That mad Irishman will kill you without mercy."

"Dick is tiptop with the stick," cried one of the soldiers at the window. "Zounds, but they're at it like bulls!"

"More power to your arm Fergus!" yelled the sergeant, as he watched the fierce encounter through the open door. "Hearns alive, but there's stick play for you!"

"The Irishman is down!" yelled one of the English soldiers. "Hurrah for Dick Haywood, and old England forever!"

The young Irishman was not down, but he had received a blow on the shoulder that sent him staggering across the yard.

Before Dick Haywood could follow up his advantage, however, Fergus was erect again and on his guard.

"The Sassenach is too handy for Fergus with the stick," muttered the landlord, as he witnessed the skillful maneuvers of the Englishman when he renewed the onslaught. "Oh, Holy Father, but there goes his stick! God prosper your arm, Fergus!"

As Dick Haywood was advancing on his opponent, Fergus sprang to meet him.

The young Irishman felt that he was not a match for the skillful fellow at the stick play, if he allowed him his own way in the encounter, but he was confident he was more than his match in strength and agility.

With one vigorous sweep of the flail, the young Irishman struck down Dick's guard, crushing his right arm with the blow, and bearing him to his knees.

Once again that fatal weapon was raised to give the finishing touch to the encounter, when Fergus met the fearless glance that was raised to his own.

"Have you anything to say, before I kill you?" cried Fergus, holding the fatal flail aloft.

"Send this purse to my mother, lads," cried the man, flinging the article through the open window. "Strike away now, Irishman, and finish me with one blow, as you did Bill Belcher."

"You helped to hang my father to-day," cried Fergus, as the vengeful fire flashed in his eyes.

"I can't deny it. I obeyed orders," replied the brave fellow. "Strike away, for Dick Haywood asks no mercy."

"You helped to burn our house down, you villain!" cried Fergus.

"Ordered to do so," replied the soldier, in defiant tones.

"You have a mother in England," continued Fergus. "What would you do to those who drove her mad, as you helped to drive my fond mother to-day, you hell-hound?"

"Kill them, if I could, to be sure," replied Dick Haywood, promptly. "Lads, don't forget the purse for mother, I'm the only one she had left, you know. Strike away, Irishman, and don't keep me in torture."

"You say you obey orders," continued Fergus, as he glared at his foe. "Who ordered you to burn our house and murder my father?"

"Our colonel, of course. We were ordered out to search the farm-houses, and to string up all those who resisted, or where we found arms concealed; your father showed fight."

"And you hung him up for defending his

own house," exclaimed Fergus. "Oh, God of mercy, and that is English justice! But I am a fool to be wasting words with you. What is your colonel's name, you hound?"

"Colonel Johnson. Halloo! What's that I hear? Troopers riding this way. Zounds, if it isn't the colonel and his lady, with a guard at their heels. Strike quick, Irishman, or you'll be late, I say."

"I can't strike you," cried Fergus, as he turned towards the mounted party, who were advancing at a full gallop. "Tell your mother she saved your life, Englishman. Come, Miles, come, the troopers are on us."

"I'll finish this fellow, anyhow!" yelled the Spitfire, plunging the sword into the sergeant's neck, "if all the troopers in Ireland were to the fore."

A cry of pain burst from the wounded man, as he felt the weapon; and then a yell of rage burst from the soldiers in the tavern.

"Down with the dog! Bayonet the murderer!" they cried, as they dashed at Miles with their weapons.

Striking down the man who was in front of him, Miles flourished the sword, sprang through the open window, and he was out in the yard before the others could touch him.

"To the mountain, Miles!" cried Fergus, as the troopers dashed into the yard.

"What's the trouble here?" cried Colonel Johnson, as the yelling soldiers dashed out of the house.

"Murdering rebels!" cried one of the men, pointing to the fugitives. "They've killed three of our men."

"Pursue them, and take them alive!" cried the colonel. "We'll hang them on that tree!"

CHAPTER III.

THE INDIGNANT COLONEL—MILES IN A HOBLE—FERGUS STANDS BY HIS FRIEND—THE SOLDIERS AT BAY.

DICK HAYWOOD, still kneeling in the yard, stared after the fugitives as they ran across the field toward the mountain, while the yelling soldiers, with the mounted troopers, dashed after them in full cry.

The colonel looked at the kneeling soldier for a moment, and then at the dead body of the corporal, as he cried:

"Are you wounded, sirrah?"

"A blow on the sword arm, colonel," replied the soldier, springing to his feet and saluting his superior officer.

"How many of the rebels attacked you?" continued the colonel.

"Two, colonel."

"Were they armed with guns, sirrah?"

"They had no arms when we attempted to arrest them, colonel," replied the brave fellow, as a blush of shame overspread his face.

"No arms! and they have slain three of the king's troopers!" exclaimed the angry officer, turning to his wife and a young lady who accompanied him. "Coward, explain how it happened. It's disgraceful."

"I'm not a coward, colonel," replied the soldier, looking the officer full in the face. "You called me a brave man the night I saved your life at the siege of Toulon."

The colonel regarded the man seriously for a few moments, and a smile of recognition spread over his face, as he held out his hand, saying:

"I ask your forgiveness, my gallant Haywood, as I did not recognize you. But tell me about this affair."

In a truthful, manly way, the soldier gave an account of the quarrel in the tavern, and the deadly struggle that ensued.

The colonel's wife and the young lady listened to the man with deep interest, while the officer himself betrayed his astonishment by loud exclamations.

"Let us enter the house, Martha," said the officer, "and see to the wounded men. Haywood, assist my daughter."

But the young lady did not await the soldier's aid in dismounting, as she sprang from the saddle on the instant.

The landlord welcomed the party at the door, but they had scarcely crossed the threshold, when a cry outside announced that the pursuers were returning.

"May God send they haven't caught the darling lads," muttered the landlord, as he heard the vengeful shouts.

The sergeant was seated at a table, pressing a handkerchief to his neck, when the colonel and the ladies entered.

When he heard the cries outside, he sprang from his seat saluting the colonel, as he cried:

"They've caught the rebelly murderers. Aha, he's the scoundrel who stabbed me in the neck! Colonel, I call on you for vengeance."

"He split my cheek open!" cried the other wounded soldier, pointing to Spitfire Miles, who was being dragged through the yard by three of the troopers.

"We caught this rascal, colonel," said the officer in command of the troop; "the other escaped in the wood above there."

"Thank the Lord for that!" muttered the landlord, fervently.

"I echo that prayer, landlord," muttered Dick Haywood. "He's a brave lad, and Dick Haywood owes him a good turn."

All eyes were now fixed on Spitfire Miles, who bore the marks of a desperate struggle, but who continued to glare at his enemies with all his old fire and venom.

"Who are you, sirrah?" demanded the colonel, advancing toward the lad, followed by his wife and the wounded sergeant.

"I'm an Irishman, out-and-out," was the bold reply, "and I hate the murdering English thieves, devil take them!"

"Procure a rope!" cried the colonel, as he cast a savage frown on the daring Miles. "Is this the fellow who stabbed you, sergeant?"

"I'm the lad!" cried the bold Spitfire, "and I'm only sorry I didn't finish him right while I was about it."

"What's your name?" cried the colonel.

"Find out!" cried Miles.

"Up with him to that tree!" cried the angry colonel. "No, wife, we cannot show any mercy to these vile rebels!"

"The poor fellow is not of sound mind, colonel," pleaded the lady. "Twould be a pity to murder him without a trial."

"Trial, indeed, for such dogs as that, Martha," laughed the colonel. "Say your prayers, sirrah, for you have just five minutes to live."

"My last words will be a curse on you and the likes of you," responded Miles, as the soldiers placed a rope around his neck; but I'll bless the lady. God prosper old Ireland, and the brave hearts fighting for her now. Oh, Fergus, darling, 'tis glad I am you escaped to be revenged on the tyrants."

"Up with him!" yelled the colonel. "Go inside, I beg you, Martha."

"Oh, this is too horrible," exclaimed the lady, as she turned towards the house.

"Father—father!" cried a sweet voice from the window, "do spare that poor lad."

"He must die, Rachel," cried the colonel. "I must do my duty."

"And so must I," cried a fierce voice from the house.

A terrified scream burst from the young girl at the same moment, as she found herself in the grasp of a strong arm, while a flashing sword was presented at her breast.

"What outrage is that?" yelled Colonel Johnson, as he dashed towards the door.

"Stand back there, on your life!" yelled the fierce voice again, "if you don't want to see your daughter stabbed to death before your eyes. Stand back there, Colonel Johnson, listen to one who has sworn vengeance against you and yours."

And Fergus O'Farrell, his eyes flashing with fierce determination, appeared at the open window, clasping the terrified girl with his left arm, while he held a sword to her breast with the right.

The agitated mother uttered a cry of terror as she saw the flashing steel within an inch of her daughter's heart, while the stern colonel grew pale, as he said:

"What means this outrage, fellow? Release my daughter, or I'll blow your brains out."

"Release your prisoner or you'll never see her alive again," cried Fergus, "for, by the God that's over me, I'll send this sword to her heart if you hang that lad or offer to move a foot to save her."

"Tis a madman," screamed the colonel's wife, in agony. "Oh, husband—husband, don't let him murder our darling girl."

"Never fear, ma'am, that I'll harm a hair of the colleen's head if they don't hang that lad there. Listen to me, Colonel Johnson."

"Wretch—fiend!" yelled the infuriated colonel, stamping with rage. "I'll cut you limb from limb; I'll burn you alive if you don't release my daughter this instant."

"Kill her, Fergus!" yelled Miles, as they dragged him to the tree. "They hung your father to-day, and don't spare one of the mur-

dering crew. Think of your mad mother, Fergus, and don't spare her."

"String up that fiend!" yelled the colonel, as he leveled his pistol at Fergus' head. "Release my child, villain, or I'll fire."

"And shoot your own daughter," cried the young man, defiantly.

With a sudden movement of his vigorous arm, the young rebel raised the half-fainting girl so as to shield himself; and still keeping the weapon to her breast, he continued:

"At the first movement you make to hang that lad your daughter dies, Colonel Johnson; and I swear it by the soul of my father, whose body lies cold in the pile below there."

The terror-stricken mother uttered a cry of agony as she beheld the fierce eyes glaring out at them, while the girl prisoner gasped forth in piteous tones:

"Don't fire—don't move, father, or he'll kill me. I know him—I know him!"

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE TWO LADS SOUGHT VENGEANCE—THE WORKING OF THE RUSE—MILES LAUGHS AT HIS FOES—ANOTHER DARING MOVE—THE BOLD REBEL ON THE SCENE.

DID Fergus O'Farrell really intend to kill that beautiful young girl, should her father carry out his threat of hanging Spitfire Miles?

Was it possible that the hitherto tender-hearted young man could plunge his sword into that fair, innocent breast?

Oh, no!

Fergus was simply playing a part in order to save Miles Tracy.

And he would freely plunge the weapon into his own heart rather than offer the slightest injury to Rachel Johnson.

Many and many a time, in the happy days of his boyhood, Fergus had watched the charming young creature as she rode along the road on her little pony, and he had often followed her for miles, over the rough mountain paths, with the single purpose of feasting his eyes on her beaming, innocent face.

The winsome country girls in the neighborhood often wondered why the handsome young farmer never made love to any of them at their merrymakings and dances, but they did not suspect that he adored the great heiress of Johnson Hall.

Yes, Fergus adored the charming young lady; and though he could never hope to win even a smile from the rich beauty, he continued to worship her day by day.

And Rachel Johnson had often noticed the handsome farmer lad who haunted her path at the hunt and the race course.

It may not be that she looked on him with favor; but certain it was that she was not displeased with the silent admiration of one who was considered the best looking youth for miles around.

When the young girl found herself in the embrace of the darling fellow, and saw the sword aimed at her breast, did she imagine that he would put his fearful threat into execution?

Not for a moment.

One glance up at the bright, flashing eyes, and one tender pressure of the muscular arm, told her that she had nothing to fear from Fergus, even though his own life would be saved by the slightest injury to herself.

To assure her more fully, as well as to gain her assistance in carrying out his purpose, the young man had whispered into her ear, when he first seized her:

"Don't be at all afraid, Miss Johnston, for I wouldn't hurt you for all the world. If you have a heart at all, help me to save that poor lad from the gallows."

"I will—I will," was Rachel's response. "I know you wouldn't harm me."

And the noble creature kept her promise to the letter.

Even her mother was deceived by her terrified accents, when she declared that Fergus would kill her, should the colonel put Miles Tracy to death.

Yes, Fergus O'Farrell was playing desperate part that day.

On leaving his home that morning with Miles, they proceeded to the mountain on a hunting excursion, accompanied by two dogs.

They had no firearms, as it was not permitted by English law for the Irish people to carry or keep weapons of any kind, even to defend themselves against the prowler and the robber.

When they reached the mountain top, the

two lads encountered a famous outlaw from the Wicklow mountains, who was then engaged in stirring the Wexford peasantry to rebellion against the hated English.

Michael Dwyer was the landlord's brother; and the gallant fellow was known to be in league with the United Irishmen, who were then working to overthrow the English rule in their native land.

As the two lads were devoted to their country's cause, and as they were eager to take a hand in the coming struggle, they gladly embraced the opportunity thus offered of enrolling themselves under the green banner.

After taking the oath administered to them by the fearless Dwyer, they returned to the valley for the purpose of procuring the pikes which Fergus' father had received a few nights before.

And Fergus wished to gain his father's consent, with his mother's blessing, before joining the insurgents on the mountain.

Alas! He would never see that kindly smile again—never clasp the manly hand that had guided him through life.

When the two lads reached the hill that overlooked their pleasant home, they beheld a blackened mass.

The farm-house and the barn were burned to the ground.

Fergus found his father's body hanging from the limb of a tree in front of the farm-gate; and kneeling beneath it, a perfect mental wreck, was his poor mother.

And then the two lads cut down the body, placing it on the green turf before the ruined home he had had the courage to defend.

They led the unfortunate mother to an empty hut near by, soothing her to sleep with promises of returning with the dead one; and then they started off to track the dastardly murderers.

While tracking the soldiers to the tavern, they found other traces of their vile work.

That thriving, peaceful valley was turned into a deserted wilderness, and the hand of the spoiler was marked by burned homes and the terrible desolation on every side.

The women and children had fled to the mountain for shelter.

The unarmed peasants sought the hills for the time, to sally down on their enemies again with pikes in their hands and vengeance in their brave hearts.

Fergus and his companion had no weapons, as we have seen, when they reached the tavern where a party of the maurading murderers were refreshing themselves after their vile work.

The young man was so eager for hasty vengeance, and so fearless in pursuit of it, that he was resolved, at all hazards, on killing all those who had murdered his father.

James Dwyer, the landlord, knew that his guests had been engaged on a pillaging expedition, but he did not know that they had murdered the young man's father.

And Fergus though his heart was burning with rage, did not tell the landlord, as he wished to surprise and crush the soldiers without creating any suspicion.

We have seen how he played his part so far; and now to follow him in the daring and desperate enterprise.

Colonel Johnson was a gallant officer, and a loving husband and father; but he was a great tyrant in dealing with the unfortunate people who loved Ireland.

He firmly believed in the "stamping out" policy; and he was one of those who could not imagine that the Irish would fight for life and land.

Standing there at that moment, with his daughter at the mercy of a young man who had defeated two of his soldiers in single combat, and also threatens her life at the first aggressive movement on his part, he was completely powerless, though surrounded by troops who would have charged a battery at his word of command.

"For mercy's sake, colonel," pleaded his wife, who had somewhat recovered from her great agitation, "let that lad go and save our child. If you hang him that wretch will murder our Rachel. Look at his eyes!"

"I believe he would," muttered the enraged officer, as he glared from his daughter's captor to Spitfire Miles who was standing under the tree with the rope around his neck.

And, oh, the malicious grin that was on the Spitfire's face as he returned Colonel Johnson's gaze, while he cried:

"Ye won't hang me to-day, ye butchering villain! Ho—ho! but ye thought ye'd have

fine fun with me; and now the tables are nicely turned on ye. Hold, Fergus."

Colonel Johnson foamed with rage as he drew his sword and rushed at Miles, crying:

"Utter another word, you dog, and I'll cut you from limb to limb!"

"Cut away, and be hanged to you!" returned the bold Miles. "Faith, but 'tis Fergus there can do a little cutting also."

"For God's sake, husband," cried Mrs. Johnson, "let the wretch go!"

"Release him!" commanded the furious officer, in a hoarse voice.

And then he muttered to himself:

"I'll hang the pair of them before night."

Miles uttered a triumphant cry when he found himself at liberty; and then rushed into the house to join Fergus, who was still clasping the young girl to his breast as he held her before the window.

"What will we do now, Fergus?" he said, as he grasped the sergeant's gun. "Will I blaze away at the colonel?"

"No—no!" cried Fergus. "Don't fear, young lady. When I meet your father in fair fight I will not spare him, but he is safe now. Get out the back way, Miles, and I will follow you."

"The villains are all around the house, Fergus, and we can't get off without fighting our way through them," returned Miles. "Do you know what we'll do, me boy?"

"Release my daughter, you wretch," yelled Colonel Johnson, to Fergus.

"Draw off your hirelings first, tyrant," cried Fergus. "Lead every one of them out to the road, so that we can escape."

"There's the horses, Fergus," whispered Miles into his ear, as he pointed to the noble animals the colonel and his wife had used.

"Yes—yes, Miles," returned Fergus, as a bold move was thereby suggested.

Then turning to the fair girl, he inquired, in a low, soft voice:

"Do you think I'd harm a hair of your head, Miss Johnson?"

"I am sure you wouldn't," was the earnest response.

"Would you mind helping two unfortunate lads to escape from death?"

"If you don't injure my father," replied the spirited girl, "I am willing to do anything I can to aid you."

"Then here goes for a ride to the mountains on your father's horses. Miles, follow me, and keep the gun. Mount the bay horse. I'll take the black. Dash out with me and we are safe."

Still clasping the young girl with his left hand, and holding the sword in his right, he lifted her on his broad shoulder and rushed out of the house.

At that moment Mrs. Johnson was pleading with her husband for the lives of the two brave lads, while the soldiers stood around the yard awaiting the colonel's orders.

Three strides forward, and Fergus with his burden was beside the colonel's powerful black charger.

Quick as thought he placed the willing girl on the saddle, and the next moment he sprang up behind her, crying:

"Stir one step, Colonel Johnson, and I will kill your daughter. 'Tis our lives for it now, and we must live for Ireland and for vengeance."

Urging on the spirited animal, and before a hand could be raised to oppose him, Fergus dashed out on the road, followed by Miles on the bay horse.

"Holy Mother of Moses," muttered the landlord, "who ever saw such dare devils?"

"Mount and after the villains," yelled Colonel Johnson, as he foamed with rage. "A hundred pounds to the man who rescues my daughter alive and slays the scoundrel."

Rachel uttered a wild cry of alarm as the horse dashed out on the road; but the glorious creature was smiling in secret, as she really enjoyed the exciting adventure.

"Don't fire on them, or you will kill my child," screamed Mrs. Johnson, as the troopers rode off in pursuit. "Colonel Johnson, you said the Irish were cowards. Does that look like it?"

"By the God that's over us, but the king cannot hold the land if there are many like them," returned the colonel, as he stared after the fugitives. "If I don't hang that young wretch soon, he'll give us trouble."

"Right you are there, you Sassenach butcher," cried a bold voice from the house.

"And there are plenty like him."

The colonel looked around for the speaker

as a stout man, holding a pike in his hand, in the garb of a peasant, strode out of the house.

All of the soldiers had started in pursuit of the lads, and the officer was alone in the yard with his wife, when the armed stranger appeared on the scene.

"Who are you, sirrah?" demanded the colonel, presenting a pistol at the stranger's head.

"My name is Michael Dwyer, at your service," was the outlaw's sneering reply. "Ask the lady to step one side, and I'll fight you like a man, though I have twenty brave fellows at my back."

"I am betrayed," cried the colonel, in despair. "Martha, that is the mountain robber."

"You lie, Colonel Johnson!" cried Dwyer. "I am not a robber. Out, boys, and take him prisoner, but don't touch the lady."

Mrs. Johnson uttered a cry of terror when she saw her husband surrounded by Dwyer's followers, who were armed with pikes and guns, and the rebel's sword struck terror to her heart, for she knew that the colonel could expect no mercy at their hands.

In the meantime, Fergus and the young girl were dashing up the mountain side, followed by Miles, and after them rode the yelling troops.

CHAPTER V.

FERGUS RECEIVES HIS TITLE—PLEADING TO SAVE AN ENEMY'S LIFE—THE ALARM ON THE MOUNTAIN—THE FIGHT COMMENCES.

"AND so you floored two of the soldiers, my lad?" said Dwyer to Fergus two hours after the escape from the tavern.

"Bedad, but he did," responded Miles, "and he'd have killed every mother's soul of them, if the others hadn't come up."

"What weapon had you to fight with, my lad?" inquired Dwyer.

"The half of a flail sir," replied Fergus, in modest tones.

"A flail, you say; and you faced the bayonet with a flail?" cried Dwyer, as he gazed with evident admiration on the stalwart figure before him.

"Tis a fine weapon, if one knows how to handle it, captain," said Fergus.

"What's your name, my man?" continued Captain Dwyer, as he grasped the young man by the hand and shook it heartily.

"Fergus O'Farrell, captain."

"Take my advice, then, Fergus, and stick to the flail. You commenced finely with it and no mistake. By heavens! but I'll never call you anything but Fergus of the Flail. Listen here, my brave lads."

The outlaw was standing on the mountain top with his men; and they had just returned from the valley, having Colonel Johnson as a prisoner with them, his wife having been allowed to return to her home.

"See here, lads," continued Captain Dwyer, pointing to Fergus, "there's a boy that you all may be proud of—that Ireland may be proud of to-day."

"Three cheers for Fergus O'Farrell," shouted Miles Tracy; "the bravest chap in Wexford to-day, and I'll maintain it."

The cheers were given with a will and a half, and Dwyer continued:

"Ay, that he is, and no mistake. And what do you think he did to-day?"

"Don't talk of it, sir," said Fergus, in modest tones. "Twas nothing to what I hope to do when the real work begins."

"Spoken like a man, Fergus," continued Captain Dwyer, "but I must tell the boys for all that, if it was only to show them what a couple of brave lads can do."

And Captain Dwyer, in earnest, eloquent words, related the stirring incidents of the tavern, and also giving an account of the young men's escape to the mountains with the young girl.

"You see, my men," continued the outlaw, in burning tones, "what two brave lads can do for Ireland when they are bent on earnest work against the robbing murderers."

"Hurrah for Fergus O'Farrell and—"

"Hurrah for Fergus of the Flail, rather," interrupted Dwyer, pointing to the weapon Fergus held in his hand. "Hurrah for the lad who floored two of the English bullies, and baffled twenty of them. Who will dare say we are in dread of the redcoats after this?"

A wild shout of defiance was the response to the appeal; and the captain continued:

"We have only a few guns and pikes, my men, but we'll soon take the enemy's arms."

What these brave lads did to day we can all do, if we have hearts as stout as our arms."

"We will—we will," shouted the others.

"Death to the Sassenachs!"

"And now bring out the prisoner till we give him what he deserves," cried Dwyer, as his honest face grew dark with rage.

"I want to speak to you about the prisoner, Captain Dwyer," said Fergus.

"And what have you got to say about him, lad?" inquired Dwyer.

"I promised his daughter to save his life, sir," replied Fergus.

"Save his life, man! You don't know what you're talking about. Don't you know that 'twas he sent the soldiers out to-day to burn, and pillage, and murder all before them? 'Twas by his order that your own father was hung to-day, man. Save his life!"

"His daughter helped to save mine. Don't you think I forget my father's death, for I've sworn to fill this flail with notches."

"Then notch one more at once for Colonel Johnson dies this evening, Fergus. Ah, you tyrant-scoundrel! You would murder and pillage the people—would you?—whose only crime is that they love the land that bore them. Now we will give you a taste of your own medicine—you hell-hound!"

The last sentences were addressed to Colonel Johnson, who was dragged before Captain Dwyer by four of his men.

"Rebel, traitor!" cried the officer in defiant tones, "you cannot terrify me. You will all swing for this outrage."

"Put the rope around his neck, and over the cliff with him, boys," yelled Captain Dwyer, in fierce tones. "He showed no mercy to our people, and he'll get none."

A thrilling scream burst out at that moment, as Rachel Johnson rushed in among the rebels, and flung her arms around her father, saying:

"So this is the way you keep your word, wretch? You promised to save my father."

"And I will save him," cried Fergus, springing toward Colonel Johnson. "Captain Dwyer, you must release the prisoner."

"Must is a big word to use to me, young man," laughed Dwyer. "Ask that tyrant if he didn't give orders to-day to hang your father."

"I did order my men to hang all rebels who resisted the king's laws," replied Colonel Johnson. "Retire, Rachel, and don't crave mercy of these wretches. My gallant son will avenge my death a hundred fold."

"Oh, Richard—Richard, my brother, why are you not here to save your father? Oh, you wretch, you promised to save him!"

"Over the cliff with him!" cried Dwyer to his followers. "Drag the girl away."

"You'll fling me over first," cried Fergus, as he took his stand before the prisoner, flourishing the deadly flail.

"The soldiers—the soldiers!" yelled one of the rebels, who was stationed on the brow of the mountain. "The soldiers are marching up here against us, Captain Dwyer."

"Let them come," cried Dwyer, as he sprang to observe the enemy. "Take the prisoner back till we settle the others. Rally the men boys, and get ready for a fight. There's a hundred of the redcoats coming up, and we can't count as many. But we'll show them what we can do on our mountain heights. Fergus of the Flail, come here."

"Yes, captain," replied Fergus, as he approached the leader, having assured Rachel that he would save her father.

"You are in love with that Sassenach maiden," said the outlaw, in low tones. "Will that hinder you from fighting her brother?"

"She's not all English," replied Fergus, blushing to the eyes. "Her mother is Irish, and I'm sure her heart is with us. But don't fear, Captain Dwyer, that I'll not fight against her brother, if he's in the English ranks. I'll not forget my father."

"Bravely spoken, man," cried the outlaw. "There's Captain Johnson—his son—coming up now, with a hundred soldiers at his back. We must send them back flying. We must hold this hill, at all costs, till we are prepared to rally down in force."

"I'll fight to the death, sir," replied Fergus.

"And so will I," cried Miles, as he held up the gun captured at the inn.

In a clear, calm voice the rebel captain gave his orders for the fight, and before the soldiers were half way up the mountain the

patriot band was ready to give them a warm reception.

Taking up positions behind rocks and bushes, and on the brow of the hill, the men with guns crouched low and took aim at the advancing enemy, while the pikemen formed behind them ready for the charge at the word of command from Captain Dwyer.

The patriots did not number more than seventy men at the moment when the alarm rang forth, but the signals were resounding over the mountain, and the others were hastening to their assistance.

With firm steps, and moving in close column, the soldiers marched up the mountain side, led on by a young officer, who waved his sword impatiently as he urged on his men.

This officer was Captain Johnson, who had learned of his father's capture an hour before, and who was now burning to rescue his parent and punish the daring rebels.

"Don't fire till I give the word, boys!" cried Dwyer, as he watched the advancing foe. "Fergus of the Flail, I want you to lead the pikemen to the charge. The first volley they fire, down on them like so many heroes!"

"Trust to me, captain," cried Fergus, who held the fatal flail in his hand.

"Remember, men," again cried Dwyer, "that we are fighting for land and life. If I see one offer to turn his back, I'll shoot him down. Get ready now, and mark your men. Pikemen, be ready for the headlong charge!"

"All ready, captain!" cried Fergus.

"Make ready, men!" again cried Captain Dwyer, addressing the men with the guns. "They mustn't come up any further. Fire!"

A ringing volley went crashing through the soldiers, and more than a dozen of their number fell on the mountain side.

"Down on your faces, boys!" cried Captain Dwyer. "They are going to fire. Hurrah—hurrah! The balls went over our heads. Now, then, my brave fellows, have at them before they can load again. Charge for Ireland, boys! Down on them!"

With a shout that was re-echoed on the neighboring hills, the rebels sprang to their feet and rushed down to meet the enemy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN SIDE—THE ESCAPE OF THE PRISONERS—MILES IN ANOTHER SCRAPE—THE HANGMAN IN PLAY AGAIN.

WITH wild cheers, and like a troop of lions rushing on their prey, the fifty pikemen dashed down on the soldiers.

Fergus of the Flail, holding aloft his fatal weapon, dashed on ahead of his band, crying:

"Death to the tyrants! Father, I'll avenge your death, or die in my first battle. On them, boys, on them; and remember your burning homes. Strike for Ireland! Strike for freedom!"

Right gallantly the English marched up to meet the rebels, and with bayonets fixed to receive the fierce onslaught.

"Steady, soldiers!" sang out young Captain Johnson, as he waved his sword aloft. "Charge for our king. Down with the wretched rebels."

And before the young officer could utter another word the "wretched rebels" were on them, with their gleaming pikes on their long poles.

Fergus dashed right at the young officer with the uplifted flail, shouting:

"Down with the English bloodhounds! Have at you, sir, for old Ireland!"

"Miserable rebel!" cried Richard Johnson, making a fierce lunge up at Fergus. "I'll hack you to pieces."

A mocking laugh burst from the young patriot as the flail fell on the sword, dashing it from the officer's grasp.

Then up went the flail again, and down it fell, striking Captain Johnson on the left shoulder, and bearing him to the ground with all the force of a battering-ram.

"I'll spare him for his sister's sake," muttered the young fellow, as he raised the terrible club once more, and then dashed into the midst of the fray, shouting:

"Strike for Ireland, boys! Down with the murdering English robbers!"

And nobly did the brave boys of Wexford strike for Ireland that day.

Gallantly, also, did the English soldiers struggle against them.

But it was impossible to resist that fierce onslaught.

The bayonets were dashed aside by the long pikes; the English were forced down the hill, fighting bravely for the time, and rallying now and then at their officer's orders.

Fergus was in the midst of the fight from the first, dealing wounds and death blows on all sides with his terrible flail.

Richard Johnson struggled to his feet while the contest was raging, and when he had somewhat recovered from the violent blow, he drew a pistol and sought out his young assailant.

The young officer would never use his left arm again, for it was shattered to the bone.

Rallying the retreating soldiers, Captain Johnson singled out Fergus, taking aim at the young patriot as he was engaged with a stout English soldier, who opposed the bayonet to the flail.

The young officer fired just as Fergus was in the act of striking down the soldier, and the ball grazed his cheek.

At that moment a wild shout was heard on the mountain-top, and down rushed Captain Dwyer with twenty of his men.

Clubbing their guns, and yelling like so many tigers, Captain Dwyer and his followers dashed in among the soldiers.

Spitfire Miles, who had remained behind with the men with the guns, was soon at the side of his loved companion.

"Have at the villains in earnest now, Fergus!" he yelled, as he struck right and left.

"At them, it is," responded Fergus. "Hurrah for old Ireland!"

And the wild shouts of triumph were redoubled, as the beaten soldiers, leaving more than half of their number on the mountain-side, beat a hasty retreat.

"Halt, my men!" shouted Captain Dwyer, as his followers dashed after the soldiers. "The troopers are down on the road."

"We'll meet you again, you cursed rebel!" cried Richard Johnson, as he retreated with the soldiers. "I'll rescue my father to-night, and hang every cursed dog of you!"

"Give them a parting volley, boys!" cried Captain Dwyer.

"Let's take that young villain, Fergus!" cried Miles; "I owe him an old grudge."

And then Spitfire dashed down the mountain after the soldiers, while the rebels poured a volley after them.

"That fellow is mad, Fergus!" cried Dwyer, as he seized the young man to detain him from following Miles Tracy. "See—the troopers are riding up to cover their retreat. Ha-ha! they have taken the mad fellow."

"The prisoner above has escaped, captain," said one of the rebels, who rushed down to the scene of the last affray. "He's riding off on the black horse with his daughter. There he goes down the hill like fury."

"Shoot him! Let fly at him!" yelled the rebel captain, in excited tones. "He's the most bloodthirsty tyrant in Ireland to-day!"

"Let him go, Captain Dwyer," cried Fergus, who was rejoiced at the escape. "For God's sake don't shoot the lady! Let us charge down and rescue my friend!"

"Too late, now. The fool has run into a trap. Oh, heavens, if I had but fifty more guns I'd attack the troopers and all. Back to the mountains, boys; the colonel is out of range now, bad cess to him!"

"But they'll hang poor Miles," cried Fergus, in despair, as he saw his friend being dragged along by the soldiers.

"We can't help that now," returned Captain Dwyer. "Help the wounded, boys."

"Then I'll save him myself, or die with him," cried Fergus, darting down the mountain side.

"Come back, you born fool—come back!" cried the rebel captain. "Did any one ever hear the likes of one man facing that band? Why, there's over a hundred of them now."

"If there was five hundred of them," returned Fergus, "they'll not hang Miles Tracy will I can strike a blow for him."

Flourishing the flail aloft, the excited Fergus rushed down the hill.

Dwyer watched him until he disappeared in a wood some distance below, and then he turned away, muttering:

"There's a man for you, every inch of him. He stretched half a dozen of the soldiers with his flail in the fight. By heavens, but I'll after him. It will never be said that Michael Dwyer deserted such a brave fellow."

In the meantime, the soldiers were dragging Miles along the road, while Colonel Johnson and his daughter were hastening to join them.

Captain Richard Johnson was rejoiced to see his father and sister at liberty; but he was smarting under defeat, not to speak of the pain in his shattered arm.

"Poltroon!" yelled Colonel Johnson, as he rode in among the troopers and the defeated foot soldiers. "Is it possible that I have lived to see English soldiers flying before the half-armed peasants of Ireland? Right about, and charge up at them again. Troopers, follow me, and we'll wipe out the disgrace in the blood of the rebels. Right about!"

"Father," replied Richard Johnson, "'tis madness to lead the horses up there, on that wild mountain. Send to Enniscorthy for assistance, and we will up again to the attack in the morning. In the meantime, let us deal with this mad rebel."

"Ha-ha!" cried the colonel, as he glared at the unfortunate Miles. "On my faith, but 'tis one of the wretches who fled with you, Rachel. Get a rope at once."

"Hang away, ye bloody villains," cried Miles with a scornful laugh. "Ye couldn't be called good soldiers, but ye make fine hangmen."

"Take him into that wood, and string him up on the highest limb you find!" cried the enraged colonel.

"Oh, father—father! Is that justice?" cried Rachel, as she cast a pitying glance on the chieftain. "His friend saved you from the rebel's fury, and now—"

"Have done, Rachel," interrupted her father, impatiently. "You are like your mother. I'll show no mercy to the vile dogs. Hang him at once, I command you! What is the matter with your arm, my son? You are wounded."

"A regular daredevil struck me with a flail, sir," returned Richard. "But I know the rascal. He is the son of one of your tenants. I'll have my revenge ere long."

"His name, Richard?"

"Fergus O'Farrell, sir."

"The young scoundrel who bore Rachel to the mountain," cried the colonel. "Oh, but I'll be rejoiced to see him where that rascal is now—hanging on the limb of a tree."

True enough—the soldiers were in the act of hauling Miles from the ground at the moment, and the poor fellow was getting black in the face as the rope tightened around his neck, while the troopers greeted him with jeers and sneering insults.

Rachel Johnson continued to plead for the victim, as she turned away her eyes to shut out the terrible scene; but the colonel was deaf to her appeals, while her cruel brother cried out to hasten the execution.

Before Miles was lifted three feet from the ground, a manly form sprang out from the wood, flail in hand, and dashed at the men who held the rope.

With one sweep of that terrible flail, Fergus struck the wretches to the ground, and Miles fell with them.

"At the wretch!" cried Richard Johnson, to the soldiers. "'Tis the fellow who maimed my arm. String them both up together."

"Gracious God!" faltered Rachel, as she recognized her young admirer. "They are both lost!"

CHAPTER VII.

FERGUS FLASHES HIS FLAIL AGAIN—THE RETREAT TO THE WOOD—ANOTHER SURPRISE—FERGUS AND HIS FRIEND IN THE TOILS.

UTTERING savage yells and oaths, the infuriated soldiers rushed on Fergus, who had stooped down on the instant to drag the rope from his friend's neck, as he cried:

"Infernal hellhounds, you will never hang this poor fellow, while I have an arm to strike for him. Up, Miles, and away through the wood. I'll keep them back."

Miles was on his feet as quickly as possible; but he had not the slightest notion of flying while Fergus was in danger.

Grasping a gun belonging to one of the hangmen, he struck down the first trooper who approached him, yelling forth the while:

"At 'em, Fergus, and down with the villains. There goes another notch for the flail, me hearty. Into the narrow path, and we're safe, my hero."

"Take them alive," cried Colonel Johnson, as his troopers pressed on the daring young men. "We'll hang them both on the same tree. Cowards! poltroons—do you quail before two striplings? Strike them down, I say, and don't fire on them."

The moment Fergus had dragged the rope

from Spitfire's neck, he faced his howling enemies with the terrible flail.

Springing from side to side, to avoid the sword and bayonet thrusts aimed at him, the dashing fellow wielded the flail with terrible effect, striking down one or more of his assailants with every sweep.

When any of the soldiers attempted to get behind him Fergus bounded backwards in the wood, striking right and left as he retreated, and thus keeping his foes in front, while he endeavored to gain the narrow, winding path.

Maddened at the desperate resistance, as they saw their companions fall before the sweeps of the flail, the infuriated soldiers endeavored to surround him on all sides and bear him down by sheer force of numbers.

But Miles was ever on the alert to meet those who attempted to strike Fergus in the side or back.

Fully as active as his friend, if not as strong of limb, he darted here and there with the gun, striking down all who would gain a cowardly advantage in the struggle.

Foaming with rage Colonel Johnson saw the young rebels keeping his stout troopers at bay, while they were gradually gaining the narrow path through the dense woods.

"The rebel dogs will escape," he yelled as he rushed forward, sword in hand. "Poltroons, I'll show you how to disable them!"

Pushing the quailing trooper's aside the angry officer made at Fergus with his sword flashing before him, as he cried:

"You young hound; I'll give you a lesson you'll not forget!"

Rachel Johnson uttered a cry of terror as she saw her father rushing to encounter the terrible flail; and the cries were redoubled when she beheld the sword flying in the air, while Fergus raised his weapon to bring it down on the old officer's head.

"Spare him—spare him!" she yelled, in agonizing tones. "For mercy's sake, don't kill my father, brave young man."

"For your sake," cried Fergus, as he turned to dash into the wood. "Away with you, Miles."

"Fire on them," yelled Richard Johnson, in furious tones. "They must not escape. Mount and surround the woods."

"After them," cried the colonel. "A hundred pounds to the man who takes the cursed young rebel, dead or alive."

"May God grant the brave lads will escape," muttered Rachel.

Richard Johnson heard that muttered prayer, and he turned to his sister with a scowling brow, as he inquired:

"What interest can you have in such vile hounds, sister mine?"

"Fergus O'Farrell is not a vile hound, Richard," replied the spirited girl. "He's a brave, noble young man. He is fighting for his native land—as you should be."

"Nice sentiments for an English soldier's daughter," sneered her brother.

"My mother is an Irish lady," returned the young girl, defiantly, "and I love the land of my birth. If I were a man, I would fight for Ireland to the death."

"Nobly spoken, young lady," said a mild voice behind her. "I am a minister of the Gospel, but the scenes I have witnessed to-day has turned my blood to gall."

"Father Murphy!" cried Rachel, saluting a stout, pleasant-faced man, dressed in a priestly garb, who had just issued from the wood.

"And so you have turned rebel, also, Father Murphy," sneered the young officer.

"Ay, that I have," cried the clergyman, as his mild face flushed with indignation and rage. "From this day forward, I will preach the doctrine of the sword. I will lead my people to the battlefield. We will drive the English tyrant from the land, or we will perish, as becomes a brave people, defending the soil that God gave us."

"You will perish on the scaffold, traitor," cried Richard Johnson, as he advanced to lay hands on the clergyman. "I arrest you as a traitor to good King George."

"Silly fool," cried Father Murphy, as he flung aside the arm of the young officer; "don't dare lay hands on me, or I will strike you to the earth. See you not that you stand alone on this highway? All your bloodhounds are in full cry after those brave young lads, who stretched so many of your bullies on the ground there. Miss Johnson, may God bless you for your noble words. Richard Johnson, let you and your blood-

thirsty father beware of the wrath of an innocent people."

And the patriot priest disappeared in the woods before Captain Johnson could reply to the thrilling warning.

The young officer was about to denounce his sister again, when a wild shout of triumph from the wood caused the young girl to tremble for the safety of the fugitives.

Before Richard Johnson could give vent to his joy at the prospect of the downfall of his enemies, shouts and shots were heard in the distance, telling that Captain Dwyer and his men were hastening to attack the soldiers.

At that moment a party of the troopers, flying in disorder, rode out on the road; and more than one empty saddle told of their defeat at the hands of the rebels.

"We have taken the two devils who fought us, captain," cried the foremost of the fugitives; but the rebels from the mountains are on us in force, and the colonel has ordered us to retreat. Here they come now!"

Out from the wood rushed Colonel Johnson followed by a dozen of his men, who were dragging Fergus and Miles with them.

"Fly to the hall, Richard, and bear Rachel with you," cried the colonel. "A horde of rebels, led on by Father Murphy, assail us on all sides. Drag on the prisoners, and sound the retreat. To the hall—to the hall! We cannot oppose them now."

A heartfelt sigh burst from Rachel, as she beheld the troopers dragging Fergus and his companion along the road; and one glance was sufficient to tell her that they were not captured without a terrible struggle.

The young men's clothes were torn to shreds; blood was streaming from saber cuts on their heads, and their faces were disfigured by the soft clay of the road.

One of the troopers bore aloft in triumph the fatal flail which Fergus had yielded with so much effect.

Along the road, riding pell mell, the troopers dashed, and after them ran the foot soldiers; and out from the wood after the fugitives rushed the victorious rebels, led on by Father Murphy.

Rachel and her brother rode on with the flying troopers, while Colonel Johnson, brave officer that he was, remained in the rear with the foot soldiers.

On and on, towards the town of Enniscorthy, the fugitives fled, and bearing their two prisoners with them, despite the efforts of the bold rebels to effect their rescue.

As Rachel passed Fergus in the flight, she cast a pitying glance on the brave fellow, who still bore himself with a proud air that told of the undying spirit within him.

Johnson Hall was within a mile of the fortified town of Enniscorthy; and the rebel bands, fearing that the colonel would summon an overwhelming force from thence, did not press the pursuit too far.

Boiling with rage, the defeated colonel rallied his men before his own house, sent off a messenger to summon reinforcements, and then turned his attention to the prisoners, on whom he had kept a strict watch during the disgraceful and hurried flight.

It was growing dark when they reached Johnson Hall, and the weary soldiers were glad to fling themselves on the ground to rest after the fatigues of the fight and the flight.

Colonel Johnson was impatient to dispose of his prisoners that night, and he was about to give orders for their prompt execution, when his daughter approached him, saying:

"Richard is dying, I fear, father. Mother says you will come to see him."

"Richard dying!" cried the angry man, as he cast a look of hatred at Fergus. "Oh, woe be to you, dog of a rebel, if my son has fallen by your hand. Bind the wretches and place them in the guard-house, sergeant. Keep watch over them till morning, and then we'll dispose of them as they so richly deserve."

The two prisoners were led away by the soldiers, but not before Fergus caught a significant glance from Rachel.

That glance told the young patriot that he had one friend in the enemy's camp, and it bade him not despair of life and liberty.

As the prisoners were led into the prison-room, a kindly voice whispered into Fergus' ear:

"Don't give up, my brave lad. One good turn deserves another. You spared me, for my mother's sake, and I'll not forget it."

One glance at the speaker, and Fergus recognized the English soldier, Dick Hay-

wood, who encountered him with equal weapons at the tavern.

CHAPTER VIII.

DENOUNCING MOTHER AND SISTER—THE DRUNKEN SPY—A DARING PROJECT—THE DESPERATE FIGHT AND THE COLONEL'S CONSTERNATION.

COLONEL JOHNSON was not in an amiable frame of mind when he entered the bedroom where his son was lying.

Deeming himself disgraced by his defeat at the hands of the rebels, the arrogant soldier was full bent on summary vengeance, and he had already dispatched messengers to the town to summon assistance, with the purpose of resuming the battle that very night.

"I cannot sleep or rest," muttered the angry man, "while one of those dogs are living on that mountain. I'll make a gallows of every tree in the wood. We'll teach them to take up arms against the king!"

It was in such a frame of mind that he entered the sick room where his son and heir was reclining on the bed.

"What is the matter, Richard?" inquired the father, gazing on the young man's countenance. "I thought it was only a broken arm you complained of."

"I wanted to see you alone, father," was the son's reply, "as I fear that I am about to be very ill. The surgeon says that my left arm will have to be cut off."

"Curse that young fiend of a rebel," groaned the colonel. "To think that he should maim you in this way. He will die at daybreak, I promise you, Richard."

"He must die to-night, father," said the young man, in vengeful tones, while he cast his eyes towards the door. "See that none will hear what I say to you, sir."

"The door is fastened, and there's no one in the room, Richard. What have you to say about this young rebel, Fergus O'Farrell?"

"He must die at once, father, and so must the other young hound."

"And why to-night, Richard?"

"Because he will escape before morning. Because your own daughter is now plotting to effect their escape, sir," hissed the young man.

"My own daughter—my Rachel! plotting for the rascal's escape! You must be mad—out of your senses—Richard!"

"I am not mad, father. Rachel is a rebel at heart, like her mother. I fear me she has taken a fancy to this young clown, whom she regards as a hero. Slay him and his companion to-night, or they will escape ere morning, with her assistance, and bear her away with them."

"Have done, sir!" cried the army soldier, as he glared at his son. "I always knew that you disliked my second wife and her daughter, but I did not dream that your hate would go so far as it does. Not another word, sir."

"Father, you must hear me out," cried the young officer, raising himself in the bed. "I do hate your second wife—my stepmother—for she would rob me of my fortune, to give to her daughter. She is a false woman, and I can prove it."

"Beware, Richard, how you speak of my loved wife," warned Colonel Johnson.

"I speak the truth, father," returned the wretch, "and I will affirm it with my dying breath. The woman you call your wife is a base adventuress, a rebel at heart, and so is her daughter. You have traitors in your own house, sir."

"You are simply a madman," returned the angry father. "Your wound has upset your mind and you are raving. Compose yourself to rest and forget your mad fancies. Never repeat what you have said to-night or I will cut you off with a shilling. You are mad."

"I tell you I am not mad, father!" cried the wounded man, in passionate tones. "At this very moment your daughter is plotting to set the rebel dogs at liberty. If you do not believe me watch their prison yourself. Watch Rachel closely to-night. Watch her mother. That woman is a fiend in human form—"

"Not another word, you base ingrate!" cried the father, with a terrible oath, dashing out of the room and banging the door after him.

"Let him rave," muttered Richard Johnson, as a vengeful smile passed over his face.

"His suspicions are aroused. The young rebel dogs shall die to-night. Rachel will be caught. Oh, if I could only discover that

woman's secret I would soon triumph over them! Curse my luck to be laid up at such a time."

Colonel Johnson's suspicions were aroused as against his daughter.

He was, even in spite of himself, affected by the words spoken against his wife who was not his son's mother.

"Can it be possible," he muttered, as he descended the stairs, "that Rachel is interested in the fate of this young rebel? I'll watch them—I'll watch her—at all events."

Colonel Johnson was hastening out to place spies on the guard-house, as well as to watch his daughter, when a commotion on the lawn attracted his attention, and he cried:

"What noise is that, fellows? Are you getting drunk on my premises?"

"We have just captured a drunken peasant, Colonel Johnson," reported one of the soldiers.

"Some rebel spy," cried the colonel. "Drag the rascal before me."

"He's very drunk, colonel," said the soldier, "and he's very violent."

"Bring him here, I say!" cried the officer, impatiently. "I'll soon get the rascal sober."

"Tare an' ages!" yelled the drunken man, as the soldiers dragged him across the lawn; "why don't ye lave me alone—bad scan to ye, for villains. I'm a dacent man—so I am, and no mistake. Give me a blackthorn in me fist, an' I'll fight ye one by one!"

"Silence, you scoundrel!" cried Colonel Johnson, striking the prisoner across the shoulder with the flat of his sword. "Get a rope, soldiers, and we'll soon sober this fellow."

"Is it to hang me, ye villains of the world?" cried the prisoner in apparent terror.

"Yes, to hang you on that tree!" thundered the colonel, in furious tones. "You are a rebel spy, you wretch, and you will die."

"Oh, murther—murther!" screamed the drunken man. "Did any one ever hear the like? Sure, I'm only a poor boy of the Powers, that took a drop too much in the town. Murther—murther, 'tisn't to hang me ye're up to?"

"Up with him!" cried the colonel, in fierce tones. "I'm certain you're a spy, sent here by that robber, Captain Dwyer."

"Mercy—mercy, colonel, agra, and I'll confess!" cried the prisoner. "Sure it was Captain Dwyer—the outlawed villain, sent me here to see how many soldiers ye had, so that he could pounce on ye in the dead of the night. Oh, have pity on a poor divil, colonel, an' I'll go through fire an' water for ye."

"Ha, ha, you wretch! So you are a spy—are you? I thought we'd sober you."

"I'll lead ye up to the boys, colonel agra, but spare me life," pleaded the prisoner, in trembling tones. "Sure 'twas the villain, Mick Dwyer, made me play the spy."

"I'd give a hundred pounds to have that rascal where you now stand," cried Colonel Johnson, with increased anger, as he thought of the manner in which his life had been threatened by the rebel captain.

"Bedad, colonel," cried the prisoner, "but I'll jump at that offer, an' ye but spare my life to me, I'll go bail, with me head, to bring ye face to face with Captain Dwyer."

Colonel Johnson hesitated to accept this offer; but he was affected by the proposal, for all that.

The man before him was a stout fellow, with flaming red hair and beard, sparkling gray eyes, and with a droll voice that told of great cunning and infinite humor.

"You are lying to save your life, you scoundrel!" commenced the officer, determined to draw the prisoner out.

"The divil a lie, colonel. Sure, ye can shoot me like a dog, if I don't do what I tell ye in less than an hour."

"You say that you'll bring Dwyer face to face with me in less than an hour, you scoundrel?" questioned the colonel.

"Providing ye give me the hundred pounds and yer word of honor, as a soldier, that I'll go clear," replied the man, in confident tones; "an' if I don't ye're welcome to shoot me like a dog. Out with the money, sir."

Colonel Johnson was a keen observer, and he saw that the man was in earnest.

The vengeful officer would give a thousand pounds to have the daring rebel captain in his power; and here was a chance at least, for a tenth of the sum.

Prompt in thought as well as in action, the officer drew forth a roll of bills, counted out a hundred pounds and handed them to the intended traitor, saying:

"If Dwyer is not in my power in an hour, you will be a dead man."

"And you pledge your word of honor, sir, that I can go free?"

"I promise you that, you scoundrel. Now, what is your plan?"

The prisoner straightened himself to his full height, shook off, with apparent ease, the soldiers who held him, and advanced to the officer, speaking in bold, earnest tones:

"My plan is very simple, Colonel Johnson, for I am Michael Dwyer, at your service."

If a thunderbolt had fallen where the daring outlaw stood, Colonel Johnson and the soldiers around him could not have been more astonished than they were.

"You Michael Dwyer, the rebel outlaw!" cried the colonel, presenting his sword at the breast of the daring fellow.

"Ay, sir; I'm Michael Dwyer, and no mistake. Now, do you know me?"

As the man spoke, he tore away the red wig and whiskers, and the bold countenance of the mountain chief was presented to the amazed officer and his soldiers.

"Seize the scoundrel. We'll hang him on the instant. To arms—to arms! His followers are at hand!"

Quick as thought, Dwyer sprang forward, and seizing Colonel Johnson's sword, forced it from his grasp.

Then, with a sudden movement of his right foot, the active outlaw tripped the officer to the ground, and planted his knee on his breast, while he held the weapon to his throat, as he yelled forth:

"Is this the way an English officer keeps his word of honor? Lay a hand on me, ye dogs, and I'll murder him on the instant."

"Seize him, soldiers!" yelled the intrepid officer, as he struggled with Dwyer.

"Back, ye villains, back!" cried the rebel chief, "or by the mother that bore me, he's a dead man. I tell you I'm here alone, Colonel Johnson, and you must keep your word."

"Cowards, wretches!" yelled the struggling officer. "Don't hesitate for my sake. In on him, and overpower the scoundrel."

Thus appealed to, the hesitating soldiers dashed in on Dwyer, and were only just in time to seize his right arm before he could plunge the sword into Colonel Johnson's neck.

Though fighting like a lion, and kicking and striking right and left, the daring robber was at length overpowered and borne to the earth.

"Put the rope around his neck and don't give him time to utter a prayer!" cried the panting officer, as he stood glaring at the captive, who was then stretched on the ground, while the soldiers were binding his hands and legs.

"You're going to hang me, are you?" cried the undaunted Dwyer.

"Up with him!" yelled Colonel Johnson, in fierce impatience.

"One word before—"

"Not a syllable, you infernal scoundrel!" interrupted the angry officer.

"Beware, Colonel Johnson!" cried a weird voice, sounding out from a clump of bushes near by. "Hang Michael Dwyer, and a great secret dies with him."

"That voice, that voice!" gasped the agitated man, staggering on the lawn, and then falling to the ground like one in a swoon.

CHAPTER IX.

MILES OFFERS CONSOLATION—TWO UNEXPECTED VISITORS—BRIGHT HOPES BLASTED—ANOTHER DESPERATE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE AND LIBERTY.

WEARY of soul and body, after the severe trials and struggles of the day, Fergus of the Flail flung himself on the hard floor of the prison room, muttering:

"Luck is against us, Miles."

"And do ye despair, Fergus?" inquired the Spitfire, in bitter tones.

"If I could only see my poor mother provided for," Fergus continued to mutter. "Oh, if I could only see that darling young lady once again before I die."

"Take my advice, ye croaker, an' ye'll see her many a time yet," grumbled Miles, flinging himself down beside his companion.

"What do you mean, Miles?"

"Shut yer eyes, an' take a sleep, for ye'll want all yer strength for the hanging in the morning," grunted the Spitfire. "That's what I'm going to do."

"But how can I see her, if I'm going to be hung in the morning, Miles?" inquired Fergus, in doleful tones.

"Who said ye were going to be hung?"

Ye're a pretty fellow—ye are—to lead the boys to battle, and giving up when the gallows threatened. Did I flinch an inch to-day, when I was black in the face, with the villain's rope around me neck?"

"I must say you did not, Miles," returned Fergus. "You have some hope of escaping now, then, I'm sure."

"Hope! To be sure and certain, I have every hope. Man alive, I'd want to die, if I didn't have hope. Go to sleep now, as I bid ye, an' be strong for work ere morning, for you'll live yet, Fergus, my darling boy, to lead the lads to victory. Sleep, and forget your troubles."

And Miles, as if to show a good example, was soon snoring away.

Fergus was very weary; and he was, also, soon asleep, and dreaming of the terrible scenes and struggles of the day; while every now and then the fair face of Rachel Johnson would appear in his visions.

From that fitful slumber Fergus was awakened by a strong hand being laid on his face, while a voice that he had heard above the din of the day's conflict sounded on his ear, saying:

"Wake up, Fergus of the Flail. A friend has come to see you."

That friend was Michael Dwyer, who had been thrust into the prison room by the soldiers when Colonel Johnson fainted on hearing the weird voice on the lawn.

Before Fergus could express his astonishment the outlaw went on, in a low voice:

"We haven't long to spare, if we would get out of this. Colonel Johnson is in a faint now; but he'll soon recover. Is that mad devil there asleep?"

"Devil fear of me, captain," replied Miles, as he sprang to his feet. "I thought ye wouldn't be mean enough to leave us in the lurch."

"It would serve you right if I did, ye wild wolf," said Dwyer.

"Don't be bothering us now," grunted Miles, impatiently. "If the boys are at hand, give them the signal to pounce on the soldiers and release us at once."

"The boys are not on hand, you born fool," said Dwyer. "We must escape without assistance from outside. Hush!"

At that moment the door of the prison was opened, and a bluff, honest voice was heard outside, saying:

"Your young mistress is very good to the rascally rebels; but I think she would do as well to think of us poor devils of soldiers, standing guard over them."

"She will think of you, I'm sure, sir," said a low, soft voice.

"Well—well," returned the soldier, "take the bread and wine into the rascals, girl. They're to be hung in the morning, and—"

"The mischief we are," interrupted Dwyer, as he sprang on the soldier and seized him by the throat, dragging him into the apartment and flinging him on the ground at the same moment. "Now, boys, take the cords they had on me and bind him fast, while I keep him quiet."

The young girl, who was dressed as a servant, uttered a faint cry as she sprang into the prison room, holding a basket in her hand.

"Oh, you won't murder the man, Fergus O'Farrell, for he is your friend!"

"Be Heaven, but 'tis the colonel's daughter," growled Miles. "Didn't I tell you, Fergus, me boy, that you'd see the—"

"Hush, you fool!" warned Dwyer. "Fergus, take the basket from the young lady. I say, soldier, do you want to save your life?"

Dwyer relaxed his iron grip on the man's throat for the moment, and the latter replied:

"I don't fear to die; I meant to save that young fellow from the gallows. But now I'll call out if it was my last word. Dick Haywood will never betray his king and country. Help—help! Treachery—treachery!"

"Choke you!" cried Dwyer, as he struck the prostrate man a fierce blow. "Out with you and cut for it, boys."

"Too late, you villains!" yelled a fierce voice at the prison door. "Now, father, will you believe you eyes? There stands your daughter in the dog's den."

And Richard Johnson, with a flashing torch in his hand, appeared at the door, while about a dozen soldiers, with muskets leveled, stood around him.

"You here, Rachel?" gasped Colonel Johnson, as he stared at the disguised girl.

Casting a scornful glance at her half-

brother, Rachel advanced to her father, who stood at the prison door, aiming a pistol at Fergus O'Farrell's head, as she replied:

"Yes, father; I came her to save these poor men from the gallows. I am only sorry that I did not succeed. Richard, you are a cruel, wicked wretch!"

"Fire on them, soldiers, and kill them all!" cried Captain Johnson; "shoot down that young scoundrel who broke my arm. Out of the way, girl, or you'll be shot!"

"I'll not out of the way!" cried Rachel, standing right in front of the prisoners: "father, will you let your soldiers murder me?"

"Stand aside, foolish girl," commanded the colonel, as he seized Rachel. "Fire on the rebels, soldiers! kill them at once."

Half a dozen muskets were aimed at the three rebels on the instant.

"Flat on your faces," whispered Dwyer to his young friends, "and then up and at them!"

"You'll kill me if you fire, lads," cried Dick Haywood, who was lying on the floor with his arms bound behind him.

"In on them and overpower them!" cried Colonel Johnson, as he drew his daughter through the door.

Clubbing their muskets, a dozen of the soldiers rushed in on the prisoners.

"Fight for old Ireland, boys," yelled Dwyer, as he closed in with the foremost soldier.

Down went that soldier, and his weapon was in the outlaw's hands.

Fergus of the Flail sprang on another soldier, receiving the blow aimed at him on the arm, while Miles, having seized Dick Haywood's gun, was striking right and left, as he yelled:

"Down with the redcoats! One rush together, boys, and out with us."

Colonel Johnson and his maimed son, stamping their feet with rage, kept yelling to the soldiers inside, while cries of alarm rang out over the lawn, as the troops hastened to the scene of the desperate struggle.

CHAPTER X.

AT IT IN THE GUARDHOUSE—THE PARLEY—A FINAL ASSAULT—THE MYSTERIOUS ESCAPE—THAT WEIRD VOICE AGAIN—TO ARMS—TO ARMS!

RACHEL JOHNSON stood outside the guardhouse with her father, while the fierce and unequal struggle was going on inside.

The young girl's fair face was the very picture of anguish, and she clasped her hands imploringly, as she appealed to the hard-hearted officer for mercy to the three fighting rebels, who held his men at bay.

Colonel Johnson continued to stamp and rave, as he saw that the brave rebels held their ground, while more than one wounded soldier reeled out from the fray.

Captain Johnson, with his maimed arm in a sling, stood near his father, calling on the soldiers, in thundering tones, to slay the "cursed rebels and then drag their dead bodies to the nearest tree."

And still the fight raged on.

Fortunately, for the three heroic rebels at least, the guardhouse was a small building, with only one window, which was secured by iron bars.

It was, therefore, impossible for many of the soldiers to enter on the scene of the conflict at the same time; and the desperate rebels inside kept striking and cutting them down as fast as they entered.

Neither could the soldiers outside, who surrounded the building on all sides, fire in on the rebels without running the risk of hitting their own comrades, not to mention Dick Haywood, who was still bound on the floor.

And all through that fierce fight Dwyer's manly voice rang out, as he dealt the telling blows right and left, encouraging his young friends to struggle to the bitter end.

The experienced chief saw that certain death awaited them, should they attempt to dash out on their numerous armed foes; and they could hope for nothing less at the conclusion of the struggle in the guardhouse.

But they struggled like desperate men—or more like hunted stags, brought to bay in some mountain defile where there was no exit save through howling and merciless foes.

"Down with the murdering villains, my heroes!" yelled Dwyer, striking down two of the soldiers with one swoop of his weapon.

"Down with them it is, me hero," yelled Spitfire Miles. "Ould Ireland forever and death to her foes."

"Can't we make a dash for it, captain?" said Fergus. "See—we have beat them all out of here. Let us out against them."

"No—no," returned Dwyer, as he closed the guardhouse door against the soldiers, while he pointed at Dick Haywood and the wounded soldiers on the floor; "we're safe here for a while. Place them in front by the door. We'll make ramparts of them."

"No sooner said than done, brave captain," said the Spitfire, seizing one of the groaning soldiers. "Tare an' ages, Fergus, but isn't this fine fun entirely?"

"Wait a while, my joker," laughed Captain Dwyer, "and you'll have better sport. On my oath, but you'll—"

A volley through the barred window interrupted the outlaws; and then a terrible groan from one of the wounded soldiers announced the effect of the fusillade.

"Stop that firing, lads," cried Dick Haywood, in indignant tones. "Do you want to murder us all in here?"

"Fire away, bad cess to ye," yelled Spitfire Miles, placing one of the wounded soldiers before him as he faced the window.

"In mercy, don't fire again," groaned the wounded man, "or you will butcher the whole of us, Colonel Johnson."

"A parley there, Colonel Johnson," cried Dwyer, approaching the window, while he also held a wounded soldier before him.

"What do you propose, you dog?" cried the colonel, glaring through the bars.

"I propose that we call it a drawn battle, you bloodhound," said Dwyer.

"Never!" cried the colonel. "I have sworn to hang you all; and by the God above us, you'll swing to-night. In through the door at them again, you infernal poltroons."

"Attack us again, Colonel Johnson," roared Dwyer, "and we will kill every mother's soul in here. Listen to me."

"Hearken to him, Colonel Johnson, I beg of you," cried Dick Haywood. "I don't want to die like a rat in a trap."

"What have you to say, you villain?" cried the officer, impatiently.

"Let us go, and we will let the men in here alone," said Dwyer.

At that moment Fergus of the Flail, who had been standing near the door, ready to strike down the first assailant who attempted an entrance, approached Captain Dwyer, and whispered a few words in his ear.

"You don't say so, Fergus?" responded the outlaw chief. "Where—how?"

"Hush, sir," was the whispered reply, "and follow me to this corner. Put them all there before the door. Come here, Miles."

"What is it, Fergus, me—"

"Hush, you fool, and follow me," continued the young chief, in low tones. "Thank Heaven, it is pitch dark in here."

Dick Haywood could not hear the whispered words spoken by the three rebels, and he could not see their movements in the dark room.

The English soldier could feel, however, that he was lifted from the floor and placed in a sitting position against the door.

The anxious fellow could also tell, from the orders given by the colonel, that his comrades outside were preparing for another onslaught on the three rebels.

"We'll be butchered!" muttered the poor fellow to his wounded companions. "The Irish rebels will brain us if our own lads don't do the business. 'Tisn't fair play."

Outside on the lawn every preparation was made for an overwhelming assault on the rebels.

Colonel Johnson and his son, now worked up into actual madness by the determined resistance of the prisoners, ordered four of the soldiers to force in the door with a long pole; while files of men, with drawn bayonets, stood ready to dash in.

Blazing torches flashed out over the scene, illuminating the lawn and the buildings near by, and casting a glare into the guardhouse through the barred window above.

Four or five ladders were placed against the wall, on which as many soldiers, with loaded guns, mounted to the window to pour in a volley on the rebels.

"God help them!" muttered Rachel Johnson, as she watched the preparations for the final assault. "A miracle alone can save them."

The young girl had retreated to the path near the side of the house, where she stood against a tall oak, trembling and sobbing at

the terrible thought that Fergus O'Farrell was soon to meet his death.

Rachel Johnson had become strangely interested in the young patriot, and as she was an Irish girl she also deplored the fate of the rebel chieftain and Spitfire Miles.

"A miracle alone can save them," she continued to mutter, as the soldiers made ready for the deadly charge.

Then out rang her father's voice, ordering the troops to the attack.

"Charge on the dogs!" he yelled. "Spare them not, soldiers! In on them with the bayonet. I will lead you."

In went the door with a thundering crash, and then into the guard-house dashed Colonel Johnson, followed by his men.

Cries of agony burst from the wounded men inside, as their comrades strode over them to bayonet the rebels, and then arose yells of rage and disappointment.

"Bring in the torches!" cried Colonel Johnson; then turning to Dick Haywood: "What has become of the prisoners, sirrah?"

"Can't answer, colonel," replied the bound soldier, as he stared around the apartment in amazement. "They were here a minute before you burst in the door."

"Escaped!" gasped the astonished officer, staring into every nook and corner and then up at the barred windows, through which the guns of the soldiers on the ladders were thrust. "What can have become of them?"

"Escaped!" cried the soldiers, surrounding the building. "Tis impossible!"

"Escaped!" muttered Rachel, as she leant against the tree. "Thank Heaven! It may be true. But how could they get out?"

"Escaped!" yelled her half-brother, as he dashed into the guardhouse. "Father, what does this mean?"

"It means, my son, that we are beset with traitors!" cried the angry colonel. "The villains are not here. Out, men, and search the grounds! They cannot break through the sentinels. There's some mystery in this."

"Ten thousand devils!" yelled his son, glaring at Dick Haywood and the wounded men, as if he suspected them of aiding in the mysterious escape. "I'd give my right hand to—"

"Preserve your right arm while you may!" cried a weird voice, as if coming from the ground beneath them; "you will need it ere long, you perjured scoundrell!"

"That voice again!" gasped Colonel Johnson, as he staggered out of the guardhouse. "Richard, we are beset by fiends."

"The rebels—the rebels are on us!" cried a soldier, who had dashed up to the guardhouse.

"Where—how?" cried Colonel Johnson.

"They are marching along the road in force, colonel," replied the officer.

"To arms—to arms!" cried the officer, drawing his sword. "We will march out to meet the rascals. They are not on the mountain now, and we'll charge them on the road. Mount, troops, and form on the lawn; we'll cut the wolves to pieces! Retire, my son!"

"I am able to fire a pistol, father," replied Captain Johnson. "But what, in the name of all the powers, can have become of the cursed rebels? What's the matter with Rachel?"

A suppressed cry broke from the young girl at this moment, and in an instant after she had disappeared behind the great tree.

"Some one has seized my child!" cried Colonel Johnson, springing forward. "To the rescue, men! Come on, Richard! To arms—to arms! the rebels are in our midst!"

"To arms—to arms!" shouted the excited soldiers on all sides, as they hurried to form on the lawn, while more than a dozen hastened after Colonel Johnson and his son.

Another cry broke from Rachel as her father gained the tree, and this time the voice sounded as if coming from behind the dense shrubbery that skirted the main avenue.

"What's the matter, Rachel?" cried her agitated father, as he dashed toward the spot from whence the cry came. "Who has dared to touch my daughter on—"

A mocking laugh, followed by the clatter of hoofs, resounded through the wood at the edge of the lawn, and then a well-known voice was heard crying:

"Tis I have your daughter this time, ye murderin' villain! If ye want to find her follow Miles Tracy. Come on—come on, and won't ye get a warm reception! Hurrah for the boys of the mountain! hurrah for old Ireland, and the brave boys who are out for her!"

CHAPTER XI.

FERGUS ON GUARD—THE MYSTERIOUS VISITOR—THE ESCAPE—DWYER PUZZLED—SPITFIRE MILES PLAYS A WILD PRANK.

IN order to throw some light on the mysterious disappearance of the rebels from the guard-house it will be necessary to watch Fergus of the Flail after they had driven the soldiers from the place.

While the young man was standing near the door watching Dick Haywood and the other soldiers, and with weapon uplifted to strike when the assault was renewed, a hand touched his shoulder.

Though fearfully excited after the hard fight, and suspicious of treachery on the part of the wounded soldiers, Fergus was not alarmed on hearing a low voice whisper in his ear:

"Silence, Fergus O'Farrell, and listen to me a moment. Don't be frightened, for I am your true friend, though I am in the garb of the hated enemy. Listen."

Fergus grasped the hand on his shoulder on the instant, and a thrill shot through his heart as he found that it was soft and small, like that of a woman's.

"I am listening," he whispered, in return, as he pressed the hand with his own. "May God bless you."

Fergus was certain that it was Rachel Johnson who had come to assist in rescuing him, and disguised in a soldier's garb.

When or how she gained admittance, the young man could not surmise, but he felt assured that his young love was at hand at the trying moment.

"Tell your friends," continued the whispering voice, "to steal after you, and you follow me in the dark. I'll hold your hand. Fear not, for I will lead you to safety."

"I don't fear a bit, young lady," responded Fergus, as he pressed the hand again. "I'd follow you forever blindfolded."

"Hasten—hasten, and don't be silly," said the voice at his ear. "Delay the soldiers getting in here as long as possible."

"We will—we will," responded Fergus, still holding the hand, while he moved toward the rebel chief, in order to announce into his ear the important intelligence.

Slowly and silently the mysterious visitor drew Fergus to the corner of the guardhouse, followed by Captain Dwyer and Spitfire Miles.

At that moment, and while the strange guide and the three rebels were standing in the corner, the lights from the torches outside threw a glare into the apartment.

"Quick, and in there with you all," whispered the disguised friend, as a small opening was visible in the apparently solid flooring. "Go first, Fergus O'Farrell. Mind the ladder. The passage leads to the stable. I will remain till the last. Hasten—hasten! They are bursting in on you again. Thank God!"

The last expression fell from the disguised guide as she stepped on the ladder after the others; and the next moment Colonel Johnson and his men were in the apartment, only to find that the prisoners had fled, leaving no trace of their means of escape behind, as the large, flat stone on the floor was in its place again.

"Crawl on, Fergus O'Farrell," whispered the guide again, "until you come to another stone that will bar your path. Follow him, Michael Dwyer; and you, you mad devil."

"Faith, but 'tis I'm thinking 'tis ye're the ould boy himself," muttered Miles, crawling through the dark, narrow passage. "But 'tis no matter if ye get us out of this scrape."

"Wait for me at the end of the passage, Fergus," commanded the strange guide, now speaking in a louder key.

"By heavens, Fergus!" said the hardy Dwyer, speaking in a husky tone, "but I heard that voice to-night. Great God! is it the dead that's come to life?"

"Hush—hush!" cautioned Fergus. "Hear—she is speaking to those above. Who in the world can it be at all?"

And then rang out that weird voice which had so startled Colonel Johnson in the guardhouse, and sent him reeling out from the place in affright.

"Let me in front, now," said the voice. "There's great danger before ye yet. We are near the entrance to the stables. Stand there, and listen to me, and mind me well."

"We are listening," said Fergus. "Go on, in God's name, whoever you are. I thought you—"

"Of course, you thought," interrupted the voice, in sneering tones, "that I was the daughter of the English colonel. Put that notion out of your head forever, Fergus O'Farrell. That girl despises you and the likes of you."

"No matter about that now, friend," said Dwyer, impatiently. "How will we escape?"

"I know you can all fight well," replied the voice. "Can you all ride—ride like very devils at that?"

"We'll ride to the very devil, if needs be," laughed Miles.

"Hush, you fool. To be sure we can all ride, friend," said Dwyer.

"This passage, as I said before," continued the strange being, "opens up into the stable. It is not probable that there will be any of the troopers there now, as they are out scouring the lawn and the road."

"Then all we've got to do is to dash out and escape," said Dwyer.

"That would be madness, in the clothes you now wear," said the stranger.

"For Heaven's sake, who are you at all?" inquired the outlaw chief, eagerly.

"No matter to you, Michael Dwyer," was the sharp reply. "Don't ask me any questions, but follow my advice, if you want to live to strike another blow for Ireland."

"Go on, in God's name," said Dwyer.

"When you get up in the stable, off with your own coats and hats, and on with the troopers' clothes you'll find there. Then out by the big oak, across the shrubbery, and into the wood beyond. There you will find three good horses waiting for you. If you are noticed the soldiers will think you're some of themselves."

"And you—what will become of you?" inquired Fergus, in tender tones, for he still believed that it was Rachel who had so nobly befriended them in that dread hour of peril.

"What will become of me?" laughed the strange being. "Why, don't bother about me, foolish lad, but away with you. Stop dreaming about Rachel Johnson, for 'tis the greatest madness in the world."

"To be sure it is," laughed Spitfire Miles, "and I always told him so."

"Away with you," said the mysterious guide, opening the way to the stable above. "There are the coats and hats of the soldiers. May God preserve you from your enemies."

"And you won't let us know you—let us see your face, good woman?" asked Dwyer, before he stepped out from the passage.

"Go, and say no more. When the time comes, you will know me, Michael Dwyer. On with the clothes and walk out boldly."

And the disguised woman retreated into the dark passage, closing the opening behind her, while the amazed rebels hastened to put on the clothes found in the empty stable.

While thus employed, they could hear the alarm cries on the lawn, as the footmen and troopers hastened to form.

Walking boldly out of the stable, without attracting the slightest notice from the busy troopers, Fergus led the way towards the tree where Rachel was standing.

Starting back suddenly on beholding the young girl, the lover was about to utter an exclamation of surprise, when Dwyer placed his hand on his mouth and whispered into his ear, as he pressed his arm to drag him on:

"Do you want to draw them all on us, you young fool? Into the wood with you. Good Father Murphy is coming with the boys."

"I'd give my life to tell her I'm obliged to her," faltered Fergus, as Dwyer dragged him along. "Oh, will I ever see the dear darling again at all?"

"Be the soul of my mother, whether she's in Heaven or the other place, but you will mutter Miles Tracy, as he stole behind the great tree, while the others hastened over the shrubbery and into the wood. "Fergus, my darling, I'll whip the colleen away to the mountain for ye. Now for it."

And the daring rascal seized the unsuspecting girl, dragged her behind the tree, lifted her in his arms, and dashed through the shrubbery after his friends, Rachel sending forth tremulous cries as she found herself in the toils of the rough stranger.

"Hush—hush, avourneen," said Miles, as he placed his hand on her mouth. "Sure, I'm taking ye to one that worships the ground ye walk on. Bedad, but they're off before me; and so much the better."

When the mischievous young rascal reached the wood, he saw Dwyer and Fergus riding away through the trees.

A third horse, saddled and bridled, was secured to a small tree in the wood; and it was but the work of a moment to place the girl on its back, and spring up behind her.

And it was then that he sent forth the defiant cry to Colonel Johnson; and then it was that Rachel learned that her captor was the wild Spitfire—the sworn friend of Fergus of the Flail.

Out through the wood, over the stone wall, and into the broad road dashed Dwyer and Fergus, and after them rode Miles and his prisoner, while cries of alarm and fierce vengeance pursued them on all sides, as the mounted troopers thundered on after them, led on by Colonel Johnson.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DOUBLE PURSUIT—MILES IN HIS GLORY—FERGUS INDIGNANT AND GLAD—MILES SENT ON A DANGEROUS MISSION—OPENING THE BATTLE.

"WHAT in the mischief ails that mad devil behind us, Fergus, that he can't keep along with us?" cried Dwyer, as he turned on his horse to look back at the Spitfire.

The moon was shining clearly at the time, and they could see the Spitfire rattling on behind them, but not at as rapid a gait as the emergency demanded.

Down the lawn, and aiming as if to intercept the fugitives, dashed a band of troopers; while on after the lagging Spitfire rode Colonel Johnson, with a dozen mounted followers, who had burst out of the wood in fierce pursuit.

Away down the road leading to the mountain a dark mass of men were in motion, moving towards Johnson Hall; and then the rebel chief knew full well, from the signals borne on the night air, that his faithful followers were coming in force to his assistance.

If they could evade or manage to break through the troopers, the fugitives knew that all danger would be over—for the present, at least; as it was doubtful whether Colonel Johnson would risk a night attack against those who had so recently demonstrated how persecuted men could fight for land and life.

Dwyer and Fergus had every hope of evading the troopers on the lawn, but they did not dream of leaving the Spitfire in the lurch.

When Dwyer spoke, Fergus cast his eyes back at his devoted companion, and an exclamation of surprise burst from him at the moment, as he perceived an object in the saddle in front of Miles Tracy.

"He's got a double load, Captain Dwyer!" he cried. "Surely he couldn't take up the good woman who befriended us? I didn't notice him lagging back when he mounted."

"The mad scamp will be the death of us, Fergus!" growled Dwyer. "Pull up a little till he comes up. We can't desert him."

"Not for the world, for he's as true as steel, sir. If we are put to it, we can dash through the troopers; or, why couldn't we face in here on the left, and make through the wood?"

"To be sure, Fergus. Here is the imp of the old boy now. Halloo, you madman of madmen, who have you got there?"

"Push on—push on, and don't be axing me bothering questions?" cried Miles, triumphantly. "I couldn't manage this blackguard of a horse at first, having no spurs; but he's off now at full speed. Push on, me brave lads, and give them all leg-bail."

"Heavens and earth, you infernal villain!" cried Fergus, as he caught a glimpse of that adored face, so pale in the moonlight; "what are you up to? Have you murdered the darling lady, you devil?"

And Fergus, as the horses dashed on side by side, raised his weapon, as if to strike the Spitfire to the earth.

"Hold yer hand there, Fergus, or you'll be ever sorry!" cried Miles. "Sure 'tis only fainted she is—the darling. And lucky it is, too. 'Twas a nice way ye left her behind, an' she dying to be off with ye."

"Off with me?" cried Fergus, completely baffled by the lying rascal's assertion.

"To be sure, man alive. Didn't ye hear her calling for ye?"

"Hush—keep together," commanded Captain Dwyer. "The troopers have gained the road before us. Can you clear that wall with the colleen, you wild devil?"

"To be sure I can," cried Miles.

"Give her to me," cried Fergus, as his heart beat wildly, while he pulled up on the road and seized the insensible girl, lifting her on the saddle before him. "Oh, my—"

"They are closing on us on all sides," thundered Dwyer, facing his horse against the stone wall. "Follow me."

With a wild cry, Miles lifted his animal over the wall and landed him on the field inside after Dwyer as he shouted:

"They're the best hunters in Colonel Johnson's stables, and no mistake. Hurrah, and long life to ye, Fergus, with the purty colleen. That was a clear jump."

Fergus had cleared the wall, still holding the insensible girl before him.

"Make for the wood," cried Dwyer, as he heard the troops thundering along the road.

"Lead on, sir," cried Fergus. "Oh, Miles—Miles, are you sure she wanted to follow me?"

"Sure and certain, me darling boy. Sure she told me she couldn't live out of yer sight at all."

"Don't believe a word the wretch is saying, Mr. O'Farrell," said Rachel, as she opened her eyes and looked up at her admirer. He stole me away—this rascal."

"Miles Tracy, you outlawed villain," cried Fergus, "but I'll have your life for this."

"Come on—come on, and stop your fighting," cried Dwyer. "'Tis all the better, maybe."

"To be sure it is," cried Miles with a roar of laughter.

"Oh, Mr. O'Farrell, you won't bear me away from my father, will you?"

"Not for the world, Miss Johnson. I'll stop at once and put you down, even though they take me and hang me."

The troopers had now cleared the wall, and were dashing through the meadow after them, yelling the while like so many fiends.

"No—no—no—" cried Rachel, in trembling tones, as she stared back at the pursuers. "Ride on, and save your life. I know you will never injure me. Ride on—ride on!"

"Injure you, Miss Johnson? I'd suffer a thousand deaths first! On, gallant horse, for life or death! Miles, you rascally liar, I'll be the death of you ere long."

And on it was with them once more.

Into the wood they dashed, the pursuers close at their heels, but not daring to fire, lest they should hit the colonel's daughter.

The fugitives had not advanced more than two hundred yards through the wood, when more than twenty men, armed with guns and pikes, sprang out to oppose them.

"Who goes there?" cried one of their assailants, seizing Dwyer's horse by the bridle.

"Friends to Ireland!" cried Dwyer. "Don't you know me, boys? Quick, and form to repel cavalry! The English troops are coming. Ride on with the colleen, Fergus."

"Hurrah—hurrah!" sang out the pikemen, in joyous tones. "'Tis the captain, bold Dwyer of Wicklow. Down with the troopers. Death to the Sassenach villains!"

Colonel Johnson was leading the troopers into the wood, when he heard the thrilling cries, which told him, only too well, what to expect in an encounter in the wood.

Though more than anxious to rescue his daughter, the soldier ordered his men to retire to the road, where the main body of his little army was drawn up to receive the approach of the rebels.

Fergus rode on, with Rachel still before him on the horse, while Dwyer, seeing that the troops did not advance to the attack ordered the advance to fall back.

Spitfire Miles was in high glee at the success of his adventure, and 'tis little he cared for his young friend's pretended anger, for he believed in his heart that Fergus was only too glad of the "accident" that compelled the fair girl to share his flight.

Fergus was overjoyed at the chance of spending a short time in converse with the maiden he loved, but he was determined, at all risks, to place her under her father's protection.

And how to accomplish that purpose was uppermost in his mind as they dashed towards the little rebel army.

The mischievous Miles, on the other hand, was equally resolved that the "pretty colleen" should cast her lot with Fergus.

"Oho!" muttered the rascal, as he watched the pair, "but won't it be fine fun to make Father Murphy marry them. Won't the Sassenach colonel be wild when he hears that his daughter is the wife of the darling lad, Fergus of the Flail. Be heavens, but there's Father Murphy with them now."

At that moment the patriot priest encoun-

tered Fergus and his fair companion, and his first inquiry was:

"Who are you, and who have you got there, young man? As I live, 'tis Fergus O'Farrell and Miss Rachel Johnson. What means this outrage, sir? How dare you?"

Before Fergus could reply to the indignant question, Rachel cried:

"Don't blame him, father, he had no hand in the outrage. It was——"

"'Twas I had two hands in it, and no mistake, Father Murphy," laughed Miles. "Sure but I thought 'twas fine fun to run off the murdering colonel's daughter."

The patriot priest looked at the laughing rascal for a moment, and a roguish smile overspread his face, as he cried:

"'Twill be fine fun for you, you great rascal, to take the young lady back again to her father; and that is what I now order you to do on the instant."

"Is it me to face the colonel, Father Murphy? Why, your reverence, 'tis dangling on the gallows I'd soon be."

"That's what you will come to yet, you rascal," returned Father Murphy. "If you refuse to take the young lady back, I will have you hung this moment. I'll teach you, and all like you, that we are not robbers and pillagers—that we do not war with women, even though they are the daughters of our most bitter enemies. Will you obey me, rascal?"

"Faith, but I suppose I'll have to," responded Miles, as a cunning smile appeared on his ugly face. "Come back, my lady!"

Fergus had dismounted from the horse, leaving Rachel sitting on the saddle, when Miles seized the bridle to lead her back.

The young girl offered her hand to her lover, as she said, in sad tones:

"Good-night, Mr. O'Farrell."

"Good-night, and God bless you," murmured Fergus, as he kissed the hand. "I will soon be fighting the soldiers, Miss Johnson. We may never meet again."

"Come—come," cried Father Murphy, "we have no time for folly. Miles Tracy, you lead this young lady around the wood and leave her at her father's house. Here comes the enemy to charge us. Make ready, men! Away, Miss Johnson, and God send you home safe!"

"In my eye," muttered the Spitfire. "'Tis up the mountain I'll take her, or my name's not Miles Tracy."

At that moment Father Murphy hastened to lead his little army, while Fergus followed after with a sad heart.

Along the road thundered the English troopers, followed by the infantry and the pieces of artillery, and soon the rattle of musketry was heard, as the rebels in the wood poured out a volley on the front ranks of the enemy.

"Pikemen from behind the ditches!" cried the patriot leader, "and out on them when I give the word. One volley, and then at them!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NIGHT BATTLE—FERGUS ENCOUNTERS AN OLD FOE—SPITFIRE MILES APPEARS AGAIN—OLD FRIENDS FALL OUT—THE FINAL CHARGE—MILES DISAPPEARS.

FERGUS OF THE FLAIL soon forgot the sad parting with Rachel Johnson in the excitement of the fight, and when he joined his own band he was all life and action.

When Michael Dwyer left his followers that evening to visit the enemy's camp in disguise, he had two objects in view.

The first was to liberate the young prisoners by stratagem, if possible.

Failing in that, the daring mountaineer was most anxious to learn the strength of the British forces at Johnson Hall, with a view to a forced rescue by a night attack on the stronghold.

Acting under Father Murphy's instructions Dwyer led his own followers to a wood within three miles of the hall, while the patriot priest, who had assumed command of the insurgent peasantry, was encamped two miles in the rear, where his numbers were increasing hourly.

The honest peasants were poorly armed, indeed, a few hundred muskets or old fowling-pieces being all the firearms they possessed, but they were burning with fierce indignation and manly patriotism, and each man felt that, with his pike, or pitchfork, or flail, he was a match for a British hireling.

The men were anxious to march on the foe at once, but Father Murphy held them back, for the purpose of ascertaining the strength of the English before leading his undisciplined forces into battle.

As hours passed, and the mountain rebel did not return to the wood, his men became impatient to move forward, either to effect his rescue, or avenge his death, if he had fallen.

And thus it was that Dwyer's men advanced along the road, having sent word to that effect to the force under the patriot priest.

The men of Wexford responded to the call on the instant; and Father Murphy led them along the road, until, as we have seen, they encountered the English troopers near Johnson's Hall.

The escape of the three prisoners, to whose rescue they were marching, induced Father Murphy to pause before risking a decisive battle with the well-trained foe.

Colonel Johnson, on the other hand, was in a desperate mood.

He was determined at all hazards, to punish the rebels and rescue Rachel.

Being firmly convinced that Fergus O'Farrell had borne the young girl away, all the father's worst passions were aroused against the hero of the flail; and he swore over and over again, that he would follow him to the death.

Besides, Colonel Johnson had received strong reinforcements from the neighboring town of Enniscorthy, including a body of yeomen cavalry, who were bent on murder and plunder, and house burning; and, with his united forces, he resolved on spreading death and desolation throughout the country.

The English and the rascally yeomanry were fighting for conquest and the extermination of the people.

The Irish peasantry, led on by leaders who had never drawn a sword before that day, were fighting for land and life, for the homes of their fathers, and for their wives and mothers, and children.

Fergus of the Flail had become a hero among his companions, as the story of his fight with the troopers had been told over and over, while those who had shared in the skirmish on the hill declared that he was fitted to lead them to victory.

When the skirmish on the hill took place Fergus had only a small body under his command; but when he joined his people after the escape, he found that he was the chosen chief of two hundred men—all friends and neighbors.

Though Colonel Johnson was fearfully excited over the events of the day and the night he was not foolhardy enough to rush blindly on the foe without ascertaining their numbers, as well as endeavoring to unmask their position.

Forming his infantry in the fields adjoining the road, he ordered a troop of cavalry forward to reconnoiter, while bodies of skirmishers pushed along through the meadows.

Along the road thundered the troopers, led on by Dick Haywood, who was burning to wipe out the disgrace of the morning by defeating Fergus of the Flail.

One volley went crashing through the mounted men as they neared the spot where the patriots were lying in ambush, but they heeded it not, though more than one saddle was emptied by the fire.

Shouting and swearing as they brandished their swords, the troopers rode on to where the main body of the patriots were posted in the woods on each side, while fifty pikemen only appeared to meet them on the highway.

"Charge for King George and Merry England!" shouted Dick Haywood, as the troopers bore down on the fifty patriots.

"Stand fast for old Ireland!" sang out Fergus of the Flail, who led the pikemen on the road. "At them, boys—at them!"

"Here's at you, Irish, for another turn," cried Dick Haywood, who recognized Fergus at once, by his voice as well as his tall, active form. "Where's your flail now?"

As the Englishman asked the question, he struck at Fergus with his sword, swerving his horse at the same time.

"I've lost my flail, but I've a good Irish pike," cried the young patriot chief, springing aside to avoid the blow. "But the bridles, lads, and then they're at our mercy."

Fast and furious, and with vengeful yells, the pikemen closed in with the mounted

troops, hacking away at the animals' bridles with their long pikes, and then thrusting the weapons at the riders.

Dick Haywood attempted to strike Fergus as the latter cut at his bridle, but the blow fell short, and the next moment the English soldier found the severed rein loose in his left hand, while his horse was prancing wildly on the road.

Quick as thought, Dick sprang from his unmanageable charger, and waving his sword, rushed at his opponent, crying:

"No quarter—no mercy this time! Hurrah for Merry England!"

"For Ireland and vengeance!" cried Fergus, striking the sword with his long pike, and breaking it in two. "Death to the yeomen, boys! Down with the villains who murdered our people! Would to God I had my flail!"

"Here it is, my darling lad!" cried a well-known voice, as Spitfire Miles dashed to his side. "I found it in the wood. Bad cess to that scamp; he'll escape you."

In the press and confusion of the hand-to-hand struggle, Dick Haywood was borne away from his opponent, and Fergus looked for him in vain through the yelling, struggling, swearing combatants.

At that moment sharp fire was heard on both sides of the road, as the English infantry advanced through the meadows, in order to assist the horsemen, as well as to attempt a flank movement against the brave rebels.

Along the road thundered a full regiment of mounted militia, guarding four pieces of artillery, and the rattle of small arms in the woods grew nearer and nearer, mingled with the thrilling war cries of the mountain men, led on by the famous chief, Michael Dwyer.

It was then, and then only, that the patriot general brought his full force against the advancing English host.

The first charging party of the mounted force of the English was repulsed in dire confusion, many of their riderless horses dashing along the road and into the woods, only to fall into the hands of the patriots on the following day; while at least one third of the riders fell on the road.

Those of the mounted men who succeeded in falling back on the advancing troopers were loud in their cries that the rebels were in overpowering numbers, and posted so as to destroy the whole of the British forces.

Their cries, as well as their disordered flight, created terrible confusion among the horsemen; and then arose a deafening uproar from the wood to add to the panic.

When the troopers fled before Fergus and his band, the young man turned to Spitfire Miles, and demanded, in angry tones:

"How did you get back so soon, you rascal? what did you do with the young lady?"

"That's a purty way to talk to one who wanted to have a hand——"

"Where's the young lady, you villain?" interrupted Fergus, seizing him by the throat as he shook his clenched hand in the cunning rogue's face. "Answer me at once, or I'll brain you on the spot!"

A defiant light flashed from the Spitfire's eyes, as he retorted in a low voice that was full of meaning:

"Strike me, and you'll never set eyes on her again, you ungrateful fool. Sure, 'tis for your sake I did it all. Maybe you think I have an eye on her meself, the sweet, purty darling of the world."

"What do you mean, you limb of the old boy?" cried Fergus, as he dashed his old friend to the ground and planted his knee on his breast as he held the flail aloft. "Answer me fairly, or I'll kill you!"

"What means this quarreling among ourselves while the battle is raging, Fergus O'Farrell?" cried a stern voice, as the patriot priest sprang out on the road.

"It means, father, that this great scoundrel has——"

"Fergus—Fergus!" interrupted Miles, as he cast an appealing glance up at his old playmate, "don't tell him on your life, or he'll shoot me for not minding him, and then you'll never know where I put her in hiding."

"Stop that nonsense, boys," cried the priest, "and forward to the charge. Fergus O'Farrell, lead on your company!"

Then raising his voice to its highest pitch, the patriot leader cried:

"Men of Wexford, have at the cowardly tyrants! Remember your burning homes and the gibbets on your roadsides! Charge for Ireland, one and all! At them with your

pikes, and don't give them time to reload their guns. Down with the English tyrants!"

"Down with the tyrants!" rang out on all sides, and the cry was caught up and re-echoed through the woods.

And out from those woods, and up the road against the cavalry, dashed the immortal heroes of Wexford, their pikes flashing in the moonlight, and their wild Irish hurrahs bearing terror to the foe.

The mounted yeomanry did not await the fierce onslaught, but turned and fled like frightened sheep, leaving the cannon behind them, without firing a single shot.

The infantry in the meadows, apparently appalled by the vengeful yells, fired but one volley at the charging foe, when they turned about face and ran towards the fortified town of Inniscorthy.

Colonel Johnson, and other gallant English officers, called on the troops to stand and fight, but all ran.

The patriot army chased the fugitives beyond Johnson Hall, taking possession of the place and seizing all arms found there.

Then a halt was sounded by the patriot commander, and the wearied army was ordered to rest till the following day, Father Murphy taking up his quarters in Colonel Johnson's deserted halls.

When Fergus sought Miles after the final charge, the cunning scamp was not to be found in the camp.

Though weary after the trials he had endured, the young man hastened to the hall to inquire for the young girl.

The aged porter at the lodge gate, who was the only follower of Colonel Johnson's left about the place, informed him that Mrs. Johnson fled with the colonel and his son, Captain Richards, he thought; but he had not seen the young lady since the flight of the prisoners.

"You are sure she did not come back very soon after?" inquired the anxious Fergus.

"Very certain, young man, or she'd have made off with the others."

"Then that infernal villain has made off with her," muttered the angry youth, as he clenched his hand on the deadly flail; "but I'll have his heart's blood if any ill befalls her. Now, I'll go and see my poor mother."

Fergus mounted one of the captured horses and rode away from the camp at the break of day, having requested some of his faithful followers to seize and hold Miles Tracy, should the mischief put in an appearance.

"This has been an eventful day for me—a great day for Ireland," muttered the heroic fellow, as he neared his ruined home. "Would to God my poor father lived to see it. And my dear mother! But something tells me I'll see greater doings yet. If all Ireland would only rise now we could drive the English into the sea."

When the anxious youth reached the cabin where he had left his mother, a sad sight was presented to him.

The good father and the kind mother were stretched in death on the same rude bier; and weeping over them were some women of the neighborhood who had sought shelter in the hovel.

CHAPTER XIV:

SPITFIRE MILES LEADS RACHEL ASTRAY—THE OLD HAUNTED ABBEY—A STRANGE SURPRISE AND A STRANGER ANNOUNCEMENT—THE RASCAL FOILED—A VILE COMPACT.

AND where was Spitfire Miles?

What had become of Colonel Johnson's fair daughter after the cunning rascal had led her away from the patriot army?

When a mad dare-devil forms a plan no thought of the dangers to be encountered then or thereafter trouble his conscience.

When Spitfire Miles conceived the idea of bearing Rachel away from her father's house his object was to serve his devoted friend Fergus by taking her off to the mountain.

But when Fergus upbraided him for the act and tore her from his arms Miles Tracy's evil spirit was fully aroused, and he regretted having tried to serve his former friend by placing a beautiful bride within his grasp.

And didn't the rogue laugh in his sleeve when the patriot commander ordered him, on pain of death, to bear Rachel back to her father's home.

"What a fine fool the sergeant thinks I am," Miles muttered, as he led the beautiful girl through the wood. "Take her back to

the bloody-minded colonel indeed, to be strung up for me pains. Wait awhile, me lady, and 'tis I'll take you to a fine lonesome spot."

"What are you muttering to yourself, sirrah?" demanded Rachel, who did not feel at ease with her guide. "You are leading my horse the wrong way."

"Not at all, me purty darling. Sure, ye heard often that the longest way round is the shortest way home. Ha-ha-ha! ye would have me ride through yer father's soldiers, to be hung at once, when I can get yer in the back way, agragal?"

Rachel grew more and more terrified as she heard that jeering laugh.

There was a wicked expression in the rascal's eye that caused her blood to run cold.

But, summoning all her courage, she urged her horse through the wood, as she cried:

"Leave me, sir, and return to your friends at once. I will find my way to the hall."

Miles burst out with another mocking laugh as he made the horse he rode bound forward till he gained Rachel's side, and then seizing the bridle, he cried:

"I wouldn't part with ye for the world, me purty darling. Sure, 'tis Father Murphy would kill me if I didn't mind him. And Fergus—me darling Fergus, that worships ye night and day—'tis he'd be the death of me if ye got lost in the wood."

"No danger of that, sirrah," cried the half-terrified girl. "Let my horse go his way. You are leading me towards the mountain."

"Faith, but I'm not, ye born beauty. Oh, who can wonder that Fergus dotes on ye entirely? Whist now, and trust to me to take ye where—"

"You'll take me no further, you wretch," cried the terrified girl, as she attempted to break away from her tormentor.

"Fair and aisy, me darling," cried Miles, seizing her in his arms and lifting her from her saddle to his own. "Be heavens, but Fergus himself could not do it uicer, and I'll stale one kiss at that, me charmer."

Rachel attempted to call out, but the rascal placed his hand rudely over her mouth, as he continued:

"Don't be troubled, me own darling, for 'tis I'm taking ye to a grander ould place than ever yer father had, and where ye'll have the ghosts of the old monks for yer company till the battle is over. Bedad, I must hurry back, for the battle is raging!"

"Where are you taking me?" gasped Rachel, as Miles urged on the horse.

"To the ould abbey, me purty one."

"The haunted abbey!" gasped the young girl, with a fearful shudder, as she sank insensible on her tormentor's breast.

"By all that's wicked, but she's mine now forever!" cried Miles, in triumphant tones. "Fergus O'Farrell, I loved ye and I'd have died for ye till ye turned on me. Now I'll put her in the smuggler's den, and get back to the battle. I love her with all my life, but I dote on a good ruction better. Who'll ever think of looking for her here?"

As the rascal uttered these words he rode out from the wood in front of a decayed, ivy-covered ruin, which had been built by the monks of former days.

The place had not been inhabited for many years, save now and then when a gang of smugglers or outlaws made it their rendezvous for a short time.

Like many of the ancient buildings in Ireland, the place had the reputation of being haunted; and several of the peasants in the vicinity were ready and willing to swear to the fact that they had seen the figure of a dark woman on the ruined walls during the lonely hours of the night.

Certain it was that even the boldest spirits in the vicinity cared little to visit the old haunted abbey by night or by day.

But Miles Tracy, who feared neither the living nor the dead, had often sought shelter in the lonesome place when caught in a storm; and on one occasion the rascal narrowly escaped with his life, as he happened to drop in on a gang of smugglers, who were regaling themselves in the only room of the building fit for a habitation.

Into this apartment the rascal bore his insensible prisoner, laid her on a rude form in the corner, and then, having secured the strong door on the outside, hastened away on his horse to join in the fight, muttering:

"I'll tell Fergus I left her on her father's lawn, and when the fight is over, I'll hurry back and take her away to a safe place in the mountain, till I coax her to marry me—the

darling. Oh, but isn't this the finest fun I ever had. Making love to the prettiest lady in all Ireland and fighting the redcoats in galore. Begor, but they're at it hot and heavy."

While securing his horse to a tree in the wood Miles perceived the fatal flail which Fergus had used so effectually the day before.

"Begor," laughed the rascal, as he picked up the weapon, "if I won't give him his darling girl, I'll give him his darling flail."

And he hastened away to take part in the battle, just as Fergus was encountering Dick Haywood on foot.

Brimful of pluck, and bold and active as a game cock, the treacherous rascal was in the hottest of the fight until the soldiers were in full retreat.

If he had the slightest twinge of conscience, it disappeared forever when Fergus felled him to the earth.

Thenceforth, and until the day of his death, Miles Tracy was destined to prove himself his old friend's most bitter enemy.

Miles forgot that they had been reared in the same cradle, that he had been nurtured and brought up by Fergus' mother, and that he had often sworn that he could die for the "darling boy."

Oh, love—love—what trouble it has caused in this world of ours.

Miles Tracy was ready to risk his life on earth and his salvation in the life to come, and all because he was jealous of brave Fergus of the Flail.

Having secured all the valuables he could obtain from the bodies of the English officers who had perished in the fight, Miles slipped away into the wood, mounted the horse, and rode back to the old abbey.

With beating heart and muttering joyous sentences, he entered the room where he had left Rachel on the rude couch.

"There ye are, me own darling," he cried, as he gazed on the figure by the moonlight streaming in through the broken window. "Will ye come with me to meet Fergus now?"

"Get you gone, you young scamp," cried a strange voice, as a womanly form, arrayed in dark garments, sprang up from the bed.

"Tare an' ages!" yelled Miles, starting back in amazement for the moment; "an' who, in the name of the ould boy, are you at all?"

"A friend to all honest people," replied the woman, "and a foe to such base, ungrateful wretches as you."

"Friend or foe, ghost, woman, or devil," cried the desperate fellow, springing forward and seizing the woman by the throat, "I'll choke the life out of ye if ye don't show me where ye're hiding the young girl!"

"You cowardly scoundrel," returned the strange being in indignant tones, "could you injure one who saved your life to-night? It was I who led you to the stable from the guardhouse at the hall. It was I who planned the escape with the dear young lady who was dragged here by you."

"I don't care if you saved my life a thousand times," yelled Miles, furious with disappointment, as he stared around the apartment for Rachel; "if you don't show her to me at once, I'll choke the very life out of you. Show her to me this instant, or by the soul of the mother who bore me, I'll make a real ghost of ye this minute. Speak, or I'll choke ye."

"Good, merciful father, pity a heartbroken creature," gasped the strange being, sinking on her knees, while Miles still held her throat.

"Miles Tracy—Miles Tracy, would you murder your own mother?"

"My own mother!" cried the rascal, as he started back, releasing his grasp on the moment. "My own mother! Ha—ha—ha! That's a good joke entirely."

"'Tis no joke, Miles, you wretched, wicked son. I am your unfortunate mother, God help me and pity me."

"And if what you say is true—if you are the mother that deserted me to the charity of strangers—what heart can I have for you? Stand up, there, till I curse you this minute. Who was my father?"

"Inhuman wretch!" cried a sweet voice, behind him, "that dear woman has watched over you from childhood, as I well know. She saved your worthless life to-night, with my assistance; and now you insult us both. Ah, if Fergus O'Farrell was present, he would hurl you from that window, you inveterate fiend."

"I defy Fergus O'Farrell to the death, Miss

Johnson," cried Miles, as he sprang forward to seize Rachel. "He turned on me to-night—he offered to choke me—and I'm his enemy forever. 'Tis you are the cause of it all, and you'll be mine, if I died for it."

"Stand back, you wretch, and don't offer to touch that angel," cried the strange woman, as with flashing eyes and uplifted hands, she sprang to Rachel's side. "Don't touch her again, or Heaven's vengeance will fall on you. Take that, you wretch, and feel a mother's hand for the first time."

As the woman uttered the last words, she struck the advancing rascal a powerful blow in the face, sending him reeling against the wall, and almost blinding him for the moment.

With a cry of fury, Miles turned to spring on the woman, when the door was closed against him, the bolt was shoved to, and he was a prisoner in the room.

Foaming and swearing at a rate that would sink a seventy-gun frigate, he dashed against the door, but all in vain.

Rushing to the window, he pushed open the frail sash, with the purpose of jumping into the yard.

"I'd break a leg at least, if I attempted to jump," he cried, as he stared out.

"Break your neck, and save me from seeing you on the gallows," cried a voice below, as the strange woman and Rachel crossed to where the horse was secured. "Beware of Fergus O'Farrell!"

"Curse Fergus O'Farrell! My black curse on you, if you are my mother," yelled the scamp. "Heavens alive, but they're making off with the horse, leaving me here with the ghosts. I'd sell myself to the devil himself to get out of here and have it out with them this very night."

"Sell yourself to me, swear to do my bidding in all things," cried a husky voice outside the door, "and you will have revenge on Fergus O'Farrell, and that young lady will be your wife."

"Who the mischief are you?" demanded Miles, startled at the voice. "I heard that voice before now—I heard it to-day."

"I am Captain Richard Johnson, the colonel's son, who was maimed to-day by that villain, Fergus O'Farrell," replied the voice through a slight crevice in the door.

"And what drove you here?" demanded Miles. "Sure, 'tis home in bed you ought to be with that broken arm."

"If that arm was not maimed I would not ask your assistance. Will you join with me against O'Farrell?"

"Answer me first how you got here," inquired the suspicious Miles.

"I was cut off in the retreat, and had to seek safety in the wood. I struck this ruin by mere accident, and I was resting out in this room when you entered."

"Then you heard all that passed between the woman that says she's my mother, and your sister, and myself?" asked the Spitfire, as his face assumed a hopeful expression at the thought that he had found a powerful ally.

"Every word. My half-sister, who is to inherit most of my father's money, through her mother, is in love with the rebel dog, and I hate him—I hate her."

"And you'll give her to me?" continued Miles, "if I help you to beat Fergus O'Farrell. Will you swear to that?"

"I will," returned Richard Johnson, in hissing tones. "I'll help you to bear her away, where you can force her to marry you, or murder her if she don't, if you will swear to place that young scoundrel in my power. Will you do my bidding?"

"With a heart and a half," exclaimed Miles, joyously. "Open the door, and we'll shake hands on the bargain."

The door was instantly unbolted, and the two scoundrels shook hands, as they swore to effect the death of Fergus of the Flail, as well as the sacrifice of the girl he loved so well.

Reclining together on the rude bed they conversed and plotted until morning, Miles bathing the maimed arm of his new ally with water from a spring in the yard.

When daylight advanced, Miles sallied out to procure food, as well as to gain information as to the movements of his late bosom friend; and his steps were directed to the cottage where they had left the crazed wife in the morning.

Feeling assured that Fergus would pay a

visit to his mother at the earliest moment possible, Miles stole to the little window.

One glance at that thrilling death-scene, where the friends of his youth lay stretched together, caused a shudder to pass through the miscreant's heart.

Kneeling beside the dead bodies was the woman who announced herself as his mother; and, oh, the words of anguish that fell from her lips as she spoke of the virtues of the dead, and of their life-long devotion to her and her son.

"Be all that's holy," muttered Miles, as he continued to stare around the little apartment, "but I can't stand that."

At that moment his eye fell on Rachel Johnson, who was sitting beside Fergus near the window, the young man holding the girl's hand within his own, as he muttered some words into her ear.

The young girl was looking up at Fergus with a countenance that spoke of love and eternal devotion, as she listened to his whispered words while she nodded in reply.

"Furies," hissed Miles, "if I don't keep my word, Fergus, you fool, you'll follow your father to-day. You darling colleen, you'll be mine, or the devil take me!"

CHAPTER XV.

FERGUS AND RACHEL—MILES COMMENCES HIS FOUL WORK—THE PLOTTERS SURPRISED—ANOTHER FIERCE FIGHT—FRIENDS AND FOES ON THE SCENE.

FERGUS O'FARRELL, while mourning over his murdered parents, on the morning after the battle, paid little heed to the two female forms who had entered the cabin.

He did not even look up, as he sat on the low stool, with his hands pressed on his throbbing brow, while fierce, revengeful thoughts crowded on his mind.

A single exclamation fell from one of the females, and then Fergus was on his feet on the instant, his eyes glaring with astonishment and his heart throbbing with wild joy, as he recognized Rachel Johnson.

"Mercy alive, Miss Johnson," he cried, as he seized her hand, "what brought you here? Didn't that villain take you home?"

"That villain—and he is a terrible villain," replied the young girl, "forced me away to the old haunted abbey. Were it not for this good woman, he would have—"

"By the souls of my dead father and mother, but I'll kill Miles Tracy," cried Fergus, as his mild blue eyes blazed with anger.

"You must not kill the lad," said the strange creature who had rescued Rachel, as she approached the young man and laid her hand on his arm. "Fergus, do you not remember the voice of the woman who rescued you last night?"

"To be sure I do, ma'am; and I'll never forget you to my dying day."

And Fergus pressed the hand that was placed on his arm, as he continued:

"I owe you my life, good woman, and I trust in God to be able to serve you."

"Then serve me, Fergus, by promising me to spare Miles Tracy if he is at your mercy," returned the woman, in a low, earnest voice.

"What! after the villain has dared to lay hands on this young lady when he was ordered to take her safe home? He's a black, foul traitor, and he deserves death."

"He is my son, Fergus, and I saved your life," said the woman. "One good turn deserves another. Spare him, I pray you!"

"Your son!" gasped Fergus. "Heavens alive, woman, who are you?"

"'Tis no matter who I am, Fergus O'Farrell, only I'm your friend—a friend to the dead parents lying there, Heaven be their bed. Will you give me your word to spare Miles Tracy, my unfortunate son?"

"I will, ma'am, I will. God knows it goes against my heart to raise my hand against him, for I was always fond of him, but to think that he should—"

"Don't say another word about that now, Fergus," interrupted the strange woman. "I rescued Miss Johnson from him, and I'll take her safe to her father."

"Sit down and rest, Miss Johnson," said Fergus, turning to the young girl with a kindly smile. "I have a horse outside that you can both ride to the town on, and I'll see that the boys won't stop you."

"Thank you, Mr. O'Farrell," returned Rachel, in friendly tones, as she took a seat near Fergus. "We have one of the horses

you rode away from the hall on last night. And so you defeated my father again? I trust he was not killed—dear father."

"He was not killed, young lady. He escaped with your mother."

"Thank God," said Rachel. "Oh, what fearful times—what bloodshed!"

"Fearful times, indeed," returned Fergus, as he cast his eyes on his dead parents, "and we haven't seen the worst yet. We people are up at last and in deadly earnest. We'll show the English what we can do."

It was while thus conversing that Miles Tracy stole to the window and peeped in at his old friend and Rachel.

One glance was sufficient to show him that Fergus had no male companion with him; and he resolved to make a cunning effort towards crushing him then and there, and then take Rachel off to the mountain.

Spitfire Miles knew that he was no match for Fergus in personal strength and activity, and that it would be sheer madness to attack him openly; but he felt assured that he could defeat him by strategy and keen cunning.

Stealing away from the window, the vile rascal proceeded to secure the horses which were grazing in a field near by.

He then hastened away to the old abbey, to consult with his ally, Richard Johnson, as to the best means of carrying out their plans.

He found the young English officer sound asleep, after the fatigues and defeats of the previous day and night, and it was with much difficulty that the Spitfire succeeded in arousing him.

"Rachel in the cabin with the scoundrel?" cried Captain Johnson, when Miles related his discovery. "I've got my sword and pistols; let us ride down at once and kill him."

"That will never do," returned the cunning Miles, "for you know he's a born devil entirely, when fully aroused. Listen to me."

And Miles explained his proposed plan of action for defeating his rival.

"Give me your pistols," he said, "and I'll steal back to the cabin again. I'll watch for him as he goes out to find the horses, and I'll shoot him unawares. Then I'll in on the young lady and bring her here. With the two horses, we'll make up to your hunting-lodge on the mountain, where it will be an easy matter to hide until I bring you plenty to eat and drink. What do you think of that?"

"I'm satisfied, if you're only sure to kill the scoundrel," replied Richard Johnson, as he looked at his maimed arm; "though I'd like to have the chance myself. Here are my pistols. Bring Rachel here, and I'll see that she marries you before long. You'll have to take her away to France or Spain; I'll supply the money."

"I'll take her to her to America, if you like," laughed Miles, with a cunning grin. "I see you want to get rid of her."

And the rascal thought to himself:

"The villain wouldn't mind if she was shot, so that he could have all the property; but let me alone to balk him in that game."

"I do want to get rid of her," said the unnatural half-brother, "and I'll make you a rich man if you will take the mother away also. But away, now, and make sure of killing that hound, Fergus O'Farrell."

"Kill me, will you?" said a manly voice, as Fergus sprang into the old abbey, holding the fatal flail in his hand; "Miles Tracy, you traitor, you deserve death."

The two vile conspirators were surprised for the moment at the sudden appearance of their intended victim, and their surprise was increased when Rachel Johnson and the strange woman appeared on the scene.

Spitfire Miles was the first to recover his presence of mind, however, as he pointed a pistol at Fergus, crying:

"You struck me last night, Fergus O'Farrell, and I swore to have your life. I swore that girl there would be my wife, and she will be. Ha, ha, ha! But I'm not in dread of your flail a bit. Stand aside, woman."

"I won't stand aside, you cowardly wretch," said the strange woman, as she faced the would-be murderer with flashing eyes. "Kill me, if you want to, and kill your own mother."

"Don't bother me with such trash, woman," cried Miles, with an incredulous grin, "you're no more my mother than that girl is my sister. Keep out of the way, I tell you, or I'll put a bullet through you in a jiffy. I have two pistols, and they're both loaded."

"Great God!" cried the woman, "but I am truly cursed for my sins. Oh, Merciful Father, what can I do to stop this bloodshed. Would you kill your mother? Would you kill the son of those who reared you so tenderly?"

"I'd kill me own father, if he stood between me and that girl!" cried Miles. "Out of the way, woman, or your blood be on your own head! Fergus O'Farrell will never get out of this alive!"

"Oh, you cowardly traitor!" cried Fergus, as he pushed the woman aside, and sprang in on the traitor, with the flail uplifted.

A mocking laugh burst forth from the Spitfire as he fired at Fergus, and the next moment the rascal was sprawling on the floor, while his old friend stood over him with the uplifted flail, crying:

"Now, who's to hinder me from killing the pair of you. Drop that other pistol, or I'll brain you, you hound!"

"Strike away!" cried Miles, as he glared up at his rival. "Be heavens, but you must bear a charmed life. I fired right at your heart, bad cess to you!"

"And I'll strike at his heart!" yelled Richard Johnson, making a dash at Fergus with the sword. "Take that!"

With a cry of agony, Rachel Johnson sprang forward to seize her half-brother's arm, but Fergus was already out of his assailant's reach, ere the weapon could touch his breast.

Springing back to avoid the thrust, he flourished the flail once more to bring it down on Richard Johnson with fearful force.

Down went the young officer, and then up sprang Miles, with the other pistol in his left hand, shouting:

"Once more I'll have at you, Fergus O'Farrell, if you are the old boy himself!"

Bang! went the pistol.

Loud screams burst from the two women, as they saw Fergus stagger for a moment, letting the flail drop from his grasp.

"I've got you now, you hound?" yelled Miles, as he dashed the empty weapon at Fergus, and sprang to seize Captain Johnson's sword. "I'll finish you now and no mistake!"

But Fergus was only stunned for the moment, as the ball struck him on the forehead without inflicting a serious wound.

Quick as a flash he stooped down to pick up the flail, and before the treacherous Miles could touch him with the sword, he was ready to receive the onslaught.

"For mercy's sake!" pleaded the excited woman, as she rushed in between to combatants, "stop this bloodshed! Oh, Miles—Miles—son of my love—don't raise your hand against your early—your best friend in the world!"

"We'll have it out now!" cried Miles, as he glared at Fergus, while he flourished the sword in defiance. "Ha, ha, you villain! you would strike me before them all last night—would you? See now how I served you. Look at the blood streaming down his purty face."

"Let me at him, woman!" cried Fergus, who was half blinded by the blood flowing into his eyes from a pistol wound on his forehead. "If he is your son, he deserves to die. Stand aside, I tell you, and let me settle it with the traitor!"

"Kill him, Miles!" cried Captain Johnson, as he lay stretched on the floor glaring at the young man who had defeated him. "Kill him, and I'll do all I promised!"

"By the God above me, but you'll both die!" cried Fergus, now fairly maddened by his vile enemies. "Stand aside, woman, and let me punish the traitor. If he was my own brother by blood, he must die!"

"Don't be too sure of that, me bully," cried Miles, as he sprang aside to avoid the blow aimed at him by Fergus. "Ho—ho, my pretty darling, see how I'll clip him this time. Where will ye have it, Fergus of the Flail? Much good that flail will do ye now."

And the active rascal sprang around to avoid the blows aimed at him by the half blinded and fully-maddened Fergus, who let fly in a wild way, while his taunting foe waited an opportunity to give him a deadly thrust with the sword.

Rachel Johnson and the strange woman, with clasped hands and despairing eyes, watched the unequal struggle as they called on the combatants in piteous tones to desist.

The Spitfire's only reply was that mocking laugh, as he still taunted his old friend to mad-

ness, while he easily avoided the wild blows hurled at him by Fergus.

"Kill him—finish the dog at once!" yelled Richard Johnson, impatiently.

"Fair and easy, sir," replied Miles, as he gathered himself for a desperate thrust. "I'll finish him and no mistake."

"What have we here?" cried a loud voice, as heavy footfalls were heard on the rickety stairway.

And Dick Haywood, followed by four English soldiers, rushed into the room.

"Just in time, Haywood!" cried Captain Johnson, in joyous tones. "Down with that young scoundrel with the flail!"

This sudden interruption gave Fergus time to wipe the blood from his eyes, as well as to recover his presence of mind.

Miles Tracy, not knowing how the English soldiers would receive him in that moment of excitement, turned to his fellow conspirator as if to claim protection.

"How is this, captain?" cried Dick Haywood, as he saw the companions of the day before arrayed in deadly combat.

"That scoundrel tried to murder me, Haywood," replied Captain Johnson, "and this good fellow was fighting for me."

"Let them fight it out like men," said Haywood, with a smile. "At it, lads, and we'll show you fair play."

Fergus did not wait for another invitation.

With a cry of rage and indignation he raised the deadly flail, and dashed the sword from the Spitfire's hand, knocking him down at the same time.

"Kill the scoundrel, Haywood, I command you," yelled Captain Johnson. "In on him, all of you, and bear him down."

"In on him, men," cried Dick Haywood, as he faced Fergus; "but one at the time. Now, Irishers, we meet again."

"And again I beat you," yelled Fergus, as he brought the fatal flail into play. "Hurrah for old Ireland, and down with the English tyrants!"

"Hurrah for old Ireland!" sang out a clear voice in the courtyard. "In, boys, and help our friend. As I live, that's Fergus of the Flail fighting the Englishmen."

"Stand together, lads," cried Dick Haywood, as he recognized the voice outside.

"All together on this fellow before the other gets up. 'Tis the outlaw of the mountain, Michael Dwyer."

"God be praised," said the strange woman, as she slipped out of the room, dragging Rachel with her; "but he mustn't see me."

With a wild shout of defiance Fergus faced his foes, and kept them at bay right gallantly, until Dwyer, with three of his followers, rushed into the room.

"Five to one!" yelled the mountain rebel, as he took his stand beside Fergus, with his gun ready for use. "I call a parley till we fight it out like men."

"A parley it is, and we'll fight it out, man to man," replied the brave Haywood.

"How came you here?" inquired Dwyer. "I thought we sent ye all flying to Ross last night."

"Colonel Johnston sent us out in search of his son and daughter, rebel," replied the bold Englishman. "We will fight you, man to man, and get back as well as we can with the young lady and our captain here."

"Bedad but I'm in doubt if ye'll ever see Ross again," said Dwyer. "And what is the matter with this chap?"

"Dwyer pointed to Miles, who lay stretched on the floor, glaring up at Fergus."

"He's a traitor, captain," replied Fergus.

"'Tis a lie!" cried Miles, defiantly; "I would not strike a blow against Ireland if I had to die for it! I fought you, but I never would fight against the land that bore me!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SPITFIRE'S IMPUDENCE—THE FLAIL AGAINST THE MUSKET AGAIN—MILES' DESPERATE MOVE—THE FLIGHT AND THE FIERCE PURSUIT.

"You scoundrel of the world!" cried Fergus, as he bent down over Miles and seized him by the throat, dragging him to his feet, "do you mean to say you're not a traitor after fighting with that English officer against me?"

"Who gave you that wound on your forehead, Fergus?" inquired Captain Dwyer.

"He did, captain."

"And you say you're not a traitor, you rascal?" continued Dwyer, turning on Miles.

"He struck me last night, and I fought him like a man," cried Miles in sullen tones. "'Twas all about the girl."

"See here, Irishers," cried Dick Haywood, who had been consulting with Captain Johnson, "we are ready to fight the battle out like men if you are ready. If not, surrender as prisoners of war, and we'll—"

"To the devil with you, Sassenach!" cried the mountain chief, while his followers laughed in derision. "If I send forth a signal fifty men will be on you in a jiffy. We have followed you all the morning, tracking you through the wood step by step."

"The mischief you have!" cried Dick Haywood, with a smile. "Then you know that I have a hundred mounted men at hand in the wood beyond."

"To be sure I do," returned Dwyer. "And not a man of them will ride back to Ross."

"That is not the question now," cried the English soldier, impatiently. "We are five here against you five, leaving out Captain Johnson who is not fit to fight."

"When we attend to this traitor we'll settle with you," said Dwyer, turning again to Miles who was held by Fergus.

"I am not a traitor, Captain Dwyer," cried the bold rascal. "I fought as hard against the English as you did."

"You stole away Miss Johnson when Father Murphy ordered you to take her home," cried Fergus. "Only I promised your mother to spare you I'd choke you as I would a dog. Let us settle with the English soldiers, Captain Dwyer. Don't touch the rascal, for his mother saved us last night."

"His mother saved us last night," gasped Dwyer, as he stared at Miles. "In Heaven's name, who is his mother?"

"She stood there a moment ago with Miss Johnson," replied Fergus, as he looked around for Rachel and the strange woman. "Where can they be now?"

"Don't kill or harm that lad, Michael Dwyer," cried the woman's voice, "or you'll be sorry for it forever after."

"Great God!" cried Dwyer, staring around the old ruin "tis the same voice again!"

"Hang all the nonsense, you Irish rebel," cried Dick Haywood, in angry tones. "Let us have the fight out. I say, young lad, I'll try another bout with you!"

"You're welcome, Englishmen," cried Fergus, as he grasped his flail and advanced to the encounter. "Here's at you."

Dick Haywood clubbed his musket to meet Fergus, and the two foes stood confronting each other for a few moments, while the others held back to watch the fray.

"A hundred pounds to you Haywood," cried Captain Johnson, "and you smash the rascal's head for him."

"I'll do it, captain; young lad, I owe you one for yesterday's work."

"Have at it!" cried Dwyer. "Fergus, show them boasters what you can do. Make ready, boys, to floor them all."

Fergus had flung Miles aside ere advancing on the Englishmen, and the young man had also wiped the blood from his eyes.

As he stood there, flail in hand, with his blood besmeared face, and his stalwart form at its full height, he appeared like a very vengeance itself, ready to deal death and destruction on all who opposed him.

Brave man that he was, Dick Haywood quailed for the moment before the flashing eyes and the uplifted flail; but the bull-dog courage was only checked for the time.

With a cry for merry England, he advanced on Fergus and struck at him with savage fury, Captain Johnson and the English soldiers cheering him on.

"Stand to your work, Fergus, my man," cried Dwyer, as the latter retreated before the fierce onslaught, "you beat him yesterday, and you can floor him to-day."

"I'll do it, captain," responded Fergus, as he in turn let fly at his opponent.

Crash—crash! went the flail against the musket, and the musket against the flail, as the two stalwart men struck right and left, springing forward and back, with lightning-like rapidity, and fencing and dodging like expert boxers in the ring.

"Splendid work, by the Lord Harry!" cried Dwyer, as he watched the play. "The poor lad is weak, or he'd floor him easily."

"That's more than you can do!" cried Dick Haywood, as he struck Fergus on the shoulder with the musket, and forcing him on his

knees with the force of the blow. "I'll try you next, you robber!"

"You're not through with me yet!" cried Fergus, as he regained his feet with a bound, the flail flashing over his head. "There's tit for tat for you!"

And it was "tit for tat," and with a vengeance at that.

Gathering all his strength, Fergus sprang on his foe, and down went the flail with crashing force, knocking the musket from the man's grasp, and striking him on the shoulder in its descent.

Before Haywood could spring aside, the flail descended again, and the brave fellow was stretched on the floor, the blood streaming from his nose and mouth.

A shout of triumph burst from Dwyer and his followers as they witnessed the victory of their champion, but that triumph was checked on the instant, as they saw the flail drop from Fergus, while he staggered and fell on the floor before a hand could be raised to prevent him from falling.

"Poor fellow," said Dwyer, as he sprang to raise the young man, "he's weak from all he endured since yesterday. In at the others, lads, and finish the fight. Ha-ha, that villain is making off. See—see, he's dragging the young lady with him!"

With wild shouts and cries Dwyer's followers dashed at the English soldiers, striking them down and securing them in a few moments.

Spitfire Miles, in the meantime, was dragging Rachel Johnson through the courtyard, and toward where the two horses were secured.

While Fergus was engaged with the English soldiers, and while all the spectators were interested in watching the fight, the cunning Miles slipped out of the apartment and stole into the adjoining room, where Rachel and the strange woman were observing the contest through some cracks in the crumbling walls.

"Here's my chance," muttered the bold rascal, as he stole up behind them, "Be Heavens! but I'll floor the woman and whip off the young girl on the big horse."

Suiting the action to the words, the wretch struck the devoted woman on the head with one of the pistols he had picked up in the other room, and the poor creature sank insensible on the floor.

Rachel was so deeply interested in the struggle going on inside that she did not notice the cruel outrage, she did not see Miles until the scamp had one arm around her, while he clapped his hand on her mouth, as he whispered in her ear.

"I'll see, to ye, my pretty darling. Come along with me. I fought too hard for you to give you up now."

As Miles uttered these words, he dragged the astonished girl down the stairs, still keeping his hand on her mouth, to keep her from calling on Fergus and his friends.

Across the courtyard the daring rascal continued to drag the terrified girl, until he reached the powerful black horse on which he had fled with her on the previous night.

Rachel struggled with all her might; as Miles lifted her on the saddle, she called out, in heartrending tones:

"Help—help! In God's mercy save me from this fiend, Fergus O'Farrell!"

Fergus heard that cry, and the voice aroused him from the stupor into which he had fallen after his violent struggles.

Dwyer only waited to see that his men had secured the soldiers, when he dashed down into the court to intercept the Spitfire.

"Hold on, there, you infernal vagabond!" cried the rebel captain, as he aimed his gun at Miles Tracy, who was in the act of springing up on the horse behind Rachel. "Stop, you young hell-hound, or I'll fire on you!"

"Fire and be hanged to you!" cried Miles, as he backed the horse out of the courtyard, keeping Rachel in front of him as a shield.

Down the stairs dashed Fergus, holding the flail in his hand.

With a cry of rage, he rushed at the marauding rascal, but Miles, sending forth a taunting laugh, wheeled the horse around, struck him with the pistol, and the spirited animal bounded away into the wood with his double burden, as the Spitfire kept yelling:

"I'll have her—I'll have her, in spite of you, Fergus O'Farrell. I'll whip her off to France, the purty darling. Hurrah for the mountain, and to the mischief I pitch you all."

"Take the other horse and after him, Fer-

gus," cried Dwyer. "Don't spare the villain when you come up with him."

"Spare him!" cried Fergus, as he sprang on the other animal. "I'll murder him, if he had a hundred lives."

"Don't forget your promise to me, Fergus O'Farrell," cried the strange woman, from the window of the ruin. "Bring back the girl, but don't have his blood on your hands."

"I've spared him once too often," cried Fergus as he rode away. "May God have pity on him now, for I won't."

And away dashed the angry youth in fierce pursuit, muttering vengeful threats, as he urged on the horse through the dense wood.

Michael Dwyer hastened back to the ruin on hearing the strange woman's voice, muttering:

"Do the dead come back to life? I'd swear that was my old love, Annie Desmond. I'll see who it is, at all events."

Rushing up to the room, from the window of which the voice had proceeded, the rebel captain looked in vain for the strange woman.

Calling on his three followers, who were standing guard over Captain Johnson and the other prisoners, Michael Dwyer proceeded to hunt through the old ruins, calling on the strange woman to come forth from her hiding-place; but he received no answering response.

He could find no trace of the being who had aroused his curiosity to an intense degree.

"I'd give my right hand to meet that woman face to face in the daylight," muttered Dwyer, "but I haven't time to waste in hunting for her now, as the troopers must be attended to. Aha, my boastful Briton, you got another fine dose from Fergus of the Flail. You won't forget him in a hurry, I'm thinking."

"You may be certain of that, rebel," replied Dick Haywood, as he sat on the floor, wiping the blood from his nose. "That's the second time he beat me. Let him beware when we meet again, for luck can't be always with him."

"He'll kill you the next time," said Dwyer, in impressive tones. "Away with the prisoners, lads, before the troopers are on us."

And away up towards the mountain rode Miles and his prisoner, with Fergus thundering on behind.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHASE UP THE MOUNTAIN—ENCOUNTERING A FRIEND—THE VILLAINS IN THE WOOD—DWYER'S GALLANTRY AND HIS GREAT PERIL.

The black horse on which Miles Tracy rode away with Rachel was powerful and fleet, as the rascal knew full well.

Though heavily weighted, he drew away from his pursuer at every stride, and even when Miles faced him up the hill his speed did not relax in the least.

Miles was jubilant at the prospect of success; and as he pressed the fainting girl to his breast, the rascal cried out in defiance, looking back at Fergus:

"Folly on—folly on, ye great fool. 'Tis a long hunt ye'll have afore ye come up with me and the purty darlin'."

Fergus was furious with rage, as he flourished the flail at his old friend, now and then bringing it down on the panting horse, while he yelled out in his rage:

"Oh, you infernal villain, but you'll catch it for this. On—on, good horse, and overtake them, if you drop after."

In less than an hour after the pursuer's horse was thoroughly exhausted, falling on the mountain side beneath its rider.

Miles Tracy had led Fergus a winding race along the mountain, now doubling, like the fox that he was, and then rushing onward at a tremendous pace.

When he looked back and saw Fergus standing over the fallen animal, he turned in the saddle, and yelled:

"Hurrah for the black horse! Good-by, ye great fool, for ye'll never set eyes on me or the colleen again."

"I'll follow you to the end of the world, you hound!" cried Fergus, bounding forward on foot. "Heaven give me strength to save the dear lady from the born devil."

Fergus dashed on, for more than a mile, at his utmost speed, and then fell powerless to the ground, thoroughly worn out, indeed, after the fearful trials he had endured.

While groaning in agony, he fell into a

stupor, from which he did not recover until night had set in on the mountain.

Thoroughly refreshed by the long sleep, Fergus arose and looked around him.

Confused at first, he soon remembered the incidents of the morning, until the moment when he fell exhausted, and then his active mind became fully aroused.

"I know where I am," he muttered, "but I am awful hungry. I must get down to the valley for some food. Oh, if I only had a horse."

At that moment, as if in reply to his appeal the shrill neigh of a horse rang out on the mountain top.

Seizing the trusty flail, the young man bounded towards the animal, crying:

"Fortune favors me. 'Tis the very horse I rode up on, and he must be rested now."

The horse was in prime condition after his day's rest while grazing on the mountain, and Fergus was soon on his back, and cantering down the steep path, his heart beating with hope.

"I'll find the villain," he muttered, as he rode through a dense wood, "for I think I know where he's taken her."

Peering through the trees, Fergus saw a dim light in the distance.

"'Tis Johnson's hunting-lodge," he muttered, pulling up the horse. "'Tis a lonesome place, and just the spot for the villain to hide her in."

Dismounting from the animal, and securing him to a tree, Fergus seized his flail, and stole through the wood.

When he reached the edge of the clearing where the hunting-lodge was located, he was about to push aside the bushes, in order to peer out, when he felt a strong hand on his shoulder.

Before Fergus could turn on the stranger, a familiar voice whispered:

"Hush, me boy."

"'Tis you, Captain Dwyer. Oh, but I'm glad to meet you. Who's in there? Did you see the young lady? Did you see that born devil, Miles Tracy? Did you—"

"Stop—stop, and step back here," was Dwyer's cautious reply to this flood of questions. "They're both in there."

"Then let us right in on them," said Fergus, as he grasped his flail.

"And face Captain Johnson with a score of troopers, you goose," smiled Dwyer. "Hear to me a moment."

"What is it, sir?"

Drawing Fergus still further back in the wood, Dwyer went on, saying:

"This morning, when you started off after the young lady, we were making our way from the old abbey, when in on us darted a whole troop of cavalry. 'Twas madness to offer to fight them, and we made off, leaving our prisoners behind."

"But you had your own men at hand, sir," remonstrated Fergus.

"To be sure I had," replied Dwyer, with a merry smile; "and you may be certain I didn't forget it, nor will the troops forget it in a hurry, either."

"Then you attacked them in the wood, brave captain?"

"That we did, Fergus, and sent them flying like cattle."

"What then, sir?" inquired Fergus, in anxious tones. "You recaptured the prisoners?"

"We didn't, Fergus. They were too quick for us, on the horses. We scattered them, however, some of them making off towards Ross, and more of them riding up this way."

"Then they're in there now, Captain Dwyer?"

"Twenty-five of them, at least, with young Captain Johnson."

"And the young lady, sir?"

"The young lady is in there too with that treacherous hound, Miles Tracy. The villain is all in all with young Johnson."

"How will we get at them at all?" inquired Fergus, as he grasped his flail. "Where are your men, Captain Dwyer?"

"My men are miles away now, Fergus, marching on Ross with the patriot army under Father Murphy. I was hurrying back to my own Wicklow mountains, to gather all the boys for a great battle, when I struck on six of the troopers out foraging. I followed them up here, to find twenty more of them. That young lady is in bad hands, Fergus. Hush—some of them are coming out this way."

Creeping under the bushes, Dwyer and Fergus awaited the approach of the soldiers.

Two men drew near, and halted at the spot where the patriots were hiding.

"There's no use in talking, Miles," said one, "for you can never force her to have you. She's dead in love with that young hound, O'Farrell."

"Then, be all that's wicked, I'll murder her outright, before I'll let her have him," rejoined the Spitfire, in fierce tones.

Fergus was about to spring out on the rascal, but Dwyer held him back, as he whispered in his ear:

"Patience, man, and don't be mad. Do you want us to face them all? Wait till we see what they're up to, and then—"

Dwyer did not finish the sentence, as he was intent on listening to Captain Johnson, who spoke to his vile companion.

"You can't force her to have you, Miles. She told you she'd die first, and I know she'll keep her word. You're a cunning fellow. Can't you devise some way of getting rid of her without killing her?"

"I don't want to get rid of her," returned the Spitfire, in passionate tones. "I know what you are up to, Captain Johnson. 'Tis you that wants to get rid of her, by fair means or foul, so that you can have all the property."

A sarcastic laugh burst from the merciless half-brother, ere he replied:

"I told you that at first, you scoundrel. No more nonsense with me. Remember, I can have you strung up on the instant."

A fiendish grin appeared on the Spitfire's face, and he clenched his hands as if about to clutch the other by the throat.

"None of your nonsense with me!" cried Captain Johnson, presenting a pistol at the Spitfire's face as he spoke. "You are my slave henceforth, or you'll die the death of a dog. If you want to keep the girl for yourself, why don't you whip her off to France or America?"

"'Tis easy talking, Captain Johnson," whined Miles, in apparent terror of the pistol. "How can I get to the coast with her, and the people out in arms on all sides."

"Then keep her here until we scatter the rebels and drive them to the gallows," laughed the cruel brother. "I don't care what becomes of her, so that she never appears at the hall again. Do you understand, sirrah?"

"Faith I do," grumbled Miles, with a bitter smile. "I'll keep her fast, and no mistake. You'll soon be off for Ross?"

"In the morning. In the meantime, if you can find a priest or a parson, marry my dear sister. There's money for you. I'll send you five hundred pounds when I'm sure she's your wife—a thousand if she's dead."

And with another mocking laugh, Captain Johnson retraced his steps to the lodge, followed by the wily Miles, who was muttering to himself:

"I'll circumvent that villain, if I had to murder him and hang for it. I'll make the girl have me, if I had to half kill her, and then I'll ride in me coach and four."

"Two of the greatest scoundrels in the world to-day, Fergus," said Dwyer.

"They won't be in the world long," responded the hero of the flail, in vengeful tones.

"Take that horse and ride away to the camp as fast as you can. Bring thirty of the boys back here—the best armed you can get. On my word, but you'll have fun before long."

And Dwyer, chuckled to himself, while Fergus eagerly inquired:

"You'll see that no ills befalls the young lady while I'm gone?"

"My hand on it, Fergus," replied the rebel chief. "Now ride as if the old boy was at your heels. You'll find the army on the road to Ross."

Fergus did not wait for another word.

Still grasping the fatal flail, he rode away down the mountain, crying:

"Before morning dawns I'll have the darling lady out of their clutches, or I'll be dead. My dark vengeance on the villains."

Dwyer waited until Fergus was well away, and then he stole towards the small hunting-lodge, muttering:

"I'll see what they're at, at all events. The Sassenachs are carousing. Wonder where they've put the young lady?"

Crawling out of the bushes, the wary outlaw gazed around the opening surrounding the building, and drew back on the instant,

as he perceived a soldier with a musket walking to and fro within a few yards of him.

The famous rebel was as impulsive as he was bold and active.

Creeping along through the bushes until he was abreast of the sentinel, he laid his gun on the ground, drew a heavy pistol from his belt, and prepared for a spring at his unconscious foe.

The soldier turned in his rounds at the moment, and moved slowly towards his crouching enemy.

Like a tiger springing at his prey, out dashed the rebel captain.

Thud—thud! went the barrel of the pistol in the man's face, while a sinewy hand was at his throat at the same moment.

The soldier fell on the ground without uttering even a groan.

"So far, so good," muttered Dwyer, as he dragged the half-stunned man through the bushes and into the wood. "And now to make what I can of him."

When the soldier recovered his senses, and stared up at his captor, he found that his arms and legs were securely bound, and that a heavy pistol was pointed at his head.

"Raise your voice and you're a dead man," threatened Dwyer, in low tones. "What's your name, my fine fellow?"

"Bill Brown," grunted the soldier. "You're a nice fellow, to serve me such a trick."

"To be sure I am," responded Dwyer. "Now, what's the password for the night?"

The soldier saw that Dwyer had appropriated his own coat and hat, as well as his musket, and he realized at once what his captor was about to undertake.

"I won't give you the password," he grunted, in a surly tone. "I'll die before I betray my friends and comrades."

"Die then," said Dwyer, in stern tones, as he cocked the pistol. "But I won't make a noise, for I can choke you to death."

And the strong grasp was on the soldier's throat on the instant.

"I'll give it—I'll give it!" gasped the man, with glassy eyes. "Tis the 'Gallows-tree.'"

"The 'Gallows-tree,'" repeated Dwyer, in low, fierce tones. "So that's the password, is it? Then, by heavens, the man who gave you that word will know what it is to die on the gallows this very night—the villain. And now you listen to me, and know that you have to deal with one who does not fear death in any shape or form."

The soldier was compelled to listen, but he could not reply, as the rebel captain had placed a gag on his mouth, while he had also secured him to a tree.

Then, stepping out on the open space, the bold rebel seized the soldier's musket and commenced to march to and fro, while he gradually drew near to the window of the lodge, from whence the sound of voices proceeded, and which was at the rear of the building.

One glance at those inside caused the blood to boil in the generous man's veins.

By the dim light of a candle, he saw Captain Johnson standing near the door, and in the center of the room were Miles Tracy and Rachel Johnson.

The young girl was kneeling on the floor, holding up her hands in terror, as the Spitfire stood over her, with his left hand clasping her throat, while he held a gleaming knife in his right.

"'Tis no use for ye to pray to me, ye purty darlin'," sneered Miles. "I've sworn a dark oath to kill ye this night, if ye don't have me at once. Ye must swear to it, by a solemn oath, there on yer knees."

"Oh, mercy—mercy!" gasped the young girl; "how can you be so cruel?"

"How can ye be so cruel as to refuse one who dotes on ye?" responded Miles. "Yer brother there give ye to me. I'll make ye a better husband than Fergus—"

"Oh, Fergus—Fergus!" gasped the poor girl, "how can you leave me to these wretches? No—no! I'd sooner die than live with a villain like you. Oh, Fergus—Fergus, save me!"

"By Heaven!" muttered Dwyer, between his clenched teeth, "I can't stand this any longer, if they are twenty to one."

With a bound the daring man reached the window sill and sprang into the room.

"Cowardly dog!" he cried, as he struck Miles with his musket, knocking him on the floor half stunned and bleeding. "To the window, my poor girl!"

"What means this outrage, sirrah?" cried

Captain Johnson, as he saw the red coat of the sentinel, while he presented a pistol at the intruder. "You'll die for this."

With a sudden bound, Dwyer struck the pistol from the villain's hand, and then stretched him on the floor with another blow.

"To the window—to the window!" he cried to the young girl, as he seized her hand to drag her back. "Don't be afraid, for I am your friend."

"Treason—help—treachery!" yelled Captain Johnson. "Guard the window, Haywood! 'Tis Dwyer, the outlaw!"

"To arms—to arms!" rang out through the building, as hurried footsteps were heard on the gravel outside.

"Trust to me, and I'll save you yet," whispered Dwyer, to Rachel, as he dashed out the candle, and then sprang on Captain Johnson. "Now, you villain, you are in my power. Feel this pistol at your head."

"In on him, Haywood, or he'll murder me! Burst open the door! Get in through the window! 'Tis Dwyer, the rebel!"

"Ay, I'm Michael Dwyer, the rebel!" yelled the desperate fellow. "And I defy you all. The house is surrounded by my men. Every man of you is doomed. Fear not, young lady."

"Stand together, men," cried Dick Haywood, "out with the horses. We'll cut through the rebels. In with that door, and rescue the captain."

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOILING THE SOLDIERS—THE VOICE FROM THE ROOF—MILES AT IT AGAIN—THE CRY FOR HELP—THE FLAIL AT WORK AGAIN.

WHEN Michael Dwyer, on the noble impulse of the moment, sprang into the rescue of the young girl, he knew that he would have to contend alone against his enemies.

It would be impossible for Fergus and his friends to reach the lodge for an hour, at least, and he felt assured that no other help was at hand.

He did hope, however, to overpower the two conspirators, and bear Rachel away, before the alarm could be given; and we have seen the bold effort he made to effect that purpose.

When the cry went forth, Dwyer knew that it was only by a sudden dash through the window that he could hope to escape.

But he could not think of leaving Rachel in the power of the cut-throats, even for a short time; and the young girl was so overcome by the thrilling scene that she could not move to the window while her friend was engaged with her unnatural brother.

When she did gain the window it was too late, as the troopers were already on the alert outside, and bristling bayonets guarded the opening while Dick Haywood and others were thundering at the door.

Dwyer saw all this on the instant, and he knew that death awaited him, unless he could frighten his foes into sudden flight.

It was then that he thought of crying out that the house was surrounded by his men, in the hope of terrifying the troopers.

But Dick Haywood, who commanded the party under Captain Johnson, was a brave fellow, as well as a strict disciplinarian.

He could not dream of flight without bearing the captain with him; and then it was his purpose to cut through the rebels, should they prove too strong to offer them battle.

Bursting in the door, only to find the room in darkness, Dick Haywood called for lights.

And then a peculiar scene was presented to the soldiers.

Standing near the window was the young girl, her hands clasped in supplication, and her eyes gleaming with terror.

Miles Tracy was sitting on the floor in the middle of the room, the blood was flowing from a wound on his forehead, while his cunning eyes were glancing furious threats on Rachel, as he muttered:

"I'll have her yet, though all the fiends below opposed me, I'll have her yet."

Captain Johnson was lying in a corner of the room gasping for breath, as he glanced up at Dick Haywood and his companions, and then around the room, as if in search of his bold assailant.

"Where's the hound?" he gasped. "Where's that cursed rebel, Dwyer?"

"What ho, out there!" cried Dick Haywood, from the window.

"What is it, sergeant?" responded one of the armed men outside.

"Did the rebel get out this way?"

"He could not sergeant," was the response, "for we saw him blow out the light, and we have stood guard here since."

"Curses on him," yelled Captain Johnson. "Where has he gone? Is the place surrounded, Haywood?"

"I've sent scouts out, captain. The men are ready to face their way through."

"Thunder alive!" cried Miles, "what great fools ye all are!"

"How is that, sirrah?" cried the captain.

"Do ye suppose Michael Dwyer would come in here on us alone if he had his men with him? I tell ye he hadn't anyone. I heard last night he was to start off to the Wicklow mountains, all alone, to rise all the people there."

"Where can the scoundrel be hiding, then?" said Captain Johnson. "He couldn't escape by the door or the window, and there's no closet in here. Here's the gun he left after him."

"Whist!" said Miles, in a half whisper, as he pointed to the fire-place, "I'll wager me life he's gone up the chimney."

"Fire up the chimney, Haywood!" yelled Captain Johnson. "Send a bullet through the scoundrel's body. Kill him—kill him!"

"Watch the roof outside there," cried the sergeant, "and fire on any one who shows himself on it. If you're up there, rebel, come down and surrender, or I'll fire."

"Fire!" yelled Captain Johnson, as he handed the sergeant a pistol.

"Blaze away!" yelled a well-known voice, as if coming from the roof.

"The scoundrel is on the roof," cried the captain, from the window. "Fire at him, men!"

The soldiers looked up at the roof, but they could not see anything like a human form.

"We can't see any one, captain," cried one.

"He's hiding behind the chimney," cried Captain Johnson. "Fire at the chimney from all sides. Kill the villain."

A rattling volley rang out on the instant, and Captain Johnson waited in vain to hear the rebel's death cry.

Dick Haywood fired the pistol up the chimney some moments before, and then looked up to note the effect.

The chimney was clear to the top.

"Curse the scoundrel!" again yelled the angry officer. "He must bear a charmed life, for I'm sure he's near the chimney. Fire again outside there."

"Fire away, and be hanged to you!" cried Dwyer, from his unseen hiding-place above. "I do bear a charmed life, Captain Johnson, for English bullets will never hit me. Waste your powder, but remember one thing certain, you villain!"

"What do you say, you rebel dog?"

"I want to tell you that I have a pistol in my hand that never misses fire. Hurt a hair of that girl's head, either of you scoundrels, and the bullet will be lodged in your hearts. 'Tis a double-barreled pistol. Mind, I'm watching you though you can never find me."

"I'll find you, and kill you, if I have to burn down the house!" yelled the enraged officer. "Drag the girl out of the house, you Miles. Sergeant Haywood, surround the place on all sides. We'll burn down the lodge. We'll smoke the scoundrel from his hiding-place!"

"Burn away!" cried the outlaw, in defiant tones. "But I warn you, that you shan't harm the young lady."

This time the rebel's voice appeared to be further away, though it still came from above, as before.

Miles Tracy dragged the trembling girl from the room, and out into the yard, followed by Captain Johnson and the troopers.

One glance up at the roof, and the cunning Spitfire, bursting out into a mocking laugh, cried:

"Oh, but ye're a fine lot of chaps intirely, so ye are."

"What do you mean?" cried Richard Johnson, staring at the roof with Miles.

"Blaze away at that tree hanging over the roof, and ye'll bring down yer bird. He's hiding in them branches."

"To be sure," cried the captain. "Send a volley into the tree, sergeant."

"Fire away, you pack of fools," again yelled Dwyer. "Ha-ha-ha!"

And this time the mocking laugh rang out in the wood beyond.

"He's escaping into the woods!" yelled Miles Tracy. "After him, captain!"

"After him, Haywood!" cried the officer. "Scour the wood! Mount and pursue him! Show him no quarter! Let's in again, Miles! You are right. The scoundrel was alone, or his men would have been on us ere this."

Forming in parties, every one of the troopers rode into the wood in pursuit, leaving Rachel alone with her cruel tormentors.

"This is no place for me now, sir," said the cunning rascal. "If Dwyer escapes, he'll send the boys here in a jiffy. I must take her to another hiding-place."

"Where can you take her?"

"Back again to the old abbey. I'll mount at once. They won't think of looking for us there again. Come on, me darling."

"For mercy's sake, let me go to my mother," pleaded the afflicted girl.

"They've caught up with the cursed rebel," cried her brother. "Hear the shots in the woods below. Oh, I hope they'll kill him."

"Hear the answering shots!" cried Miles Tracy, bending his head to listen. "And hear the shouts—the Irish cries—in return. Captain Johnson, the boys are on us, as sure as I am standing here. Come away, me darling."

"No—no!" cried Rachel. "Help—help—who'll save me from the murderers?"

"The rebels are on us in force, captain," cried a wounded trooper, as he rode out from the wood.

"Come on with me, girl," cried Miles, as a well-known voice rang on his ears. "Be all that's wicked, but here comes Fergus of the Flail. Come with me, or I'll murder ye."

"We're attacked on all sides, captain," cried Dick Haywood, riding in from the wood at the head of half a dozen troopers. "They are led on by that young devil with the flail. They are all well mounted. Fly, or you are lost. Follow me, and we'll endeavor to break through them."

"Save me—save me!—Fergus O'Farrell," cried Rachel, as Miles attempted to force her on the black horse.

"On, boys, on, and down with the murdering villains!" rang out the voice of Fergus of the Flail, as he dashed through the road and into the clearing.

"Steady there, troopers, and stand by your captain," cried Dick Haywood.

"At them, boys!" cried Fergus, as he flourished his flail and dashed at his foes. "Don't let that villain, Miles Tracy, escape with the young lady, on your lives!"

"To the death I defy ye, Fergus O'Farrell!" cried Miles, as he forced Rachel on the black horse. "Come near me, and I'll send this knife into her heart!"

Fergus was striking away at the troopers, who were guarding their captain right manfully; and the brave young man was supported by half a dozen followers.

Foot by foot the troopers were forced to give way, one of their number falling before every blow of the flail.

"Surround that villain!" cried Fergus, as he knocked the last opponent from his horse and dashed at Miles. "He can't escape over that wall."

"The devil he can't!" yelled the defiant Miles. "Hurrah—hurrah! Over we go. Fergus, here's another wild hunt for ye."

And the daring fellow dashed over the stone wall on the gallant horse, bearing Rachel with him.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OLD HAG VISITOR—A MODEST DEMAND—MILES IN HIS TRUE COLORS—THE LASH AT WORK—THE CUT AND THE FLIGHT.

Two days had passed away since Fergus defeated the English troopers at the hunting-lodge, and the Irish patriots under General Murphy were encamped near the fortified town of Ross, which was defended by a strong English garrison.

Fergus succeeded in capturing Captain Johnson that night, and the treacherous plotter was then a prisoner in his own father's house, which was held by the patriots.

The young patriot chief, after having defeated the troopers at the lodge, hastened away in pursuit of Miles Tracy and Rachel, but the Spitfire succeeded in escaping with the young girl, as the powerful black horse was more than a match for his pursuers.

After spending the whole of the next day in searching for Miles and the young girl, Fergus joined the patriot army advancing on the town of Ross, and he was at once assigned to an important command.

Colonel Johnson, who was in command of the English forces in Ross, was more bitter than ever against the patriots.

He had met with defeat and disaster on all sides, as the men of Wexford drove his minions back in confusion whenever an attempt was made to arrest the advance on Ross.

It was evening time as the colonel strode to and fro in the sitting-room at the headquarters, while his wife sat at the window watching the distant hills.

"Rachel has fled with that cursed young rebel, Martha," groaned the soldier. "I will disown her, I will—"

"My dear husband," remonstrated the lady, "how can you be so unreasonable? You know the dear girl would not desert us in that way. Richard has poisoned your mind against Rachel. If she is not held a prisoner she is dead."

"I would prefer to see her dead than running off with that young wretch of a rebel," groaned the colonel. "Curses on them, but I will exterminate them all. Wait until we settle with the dogs to-morrow."

"The people are in deadly earnest, husband," returned the lady. "They fight like born heroes. But, oh, what can have happened to our dear girl?"

At that moment a soldier entered the door and saluted the officer, saying:

"An old countrywoman desires to see you, colonel. She says she has tidings of Miss Rachel. She will not tell—"

"Out of me way, ye blackguard!" cried an ugly old woman, who followed the soldier into the room. "Lave me spake to the colonel and his lady in saycret."

"What do you want, woman?" demanded the colonel, staring at the rude intruder, while he motioned to the soldier to retire.

"I cum to tell ye about yer daughter, sur, if ye please."

"What of my daughter, good woman?" cried the anxious mother. "Oh, she is alive and well, is she not?"

"Begor, ma'am, but she's alive, an' no mistake, but she's in a bad way intirely."

"Where is she, woman?" demanded the colonel, as he bent his keen eyes on the old woman's cunning face.

With a grinning smile the hideous old creature winked at the officer as she replied:

"How much is it worth to ye to know, sir, afore I tell ye?"

"What do you mean, woman?" demanded the indignant officer. "Where is my daughter? Tell me at once, or—"

"Fair an' aisy, sur," interrupted the old hag, "and don't offer to harm me, or ye'll never lay eyes on yer child agin."

"Do you know where my daughter is, good woman?" inquired Mrs. Johnson.

"I do, ma'am; she's in the power of the lad Fergus O'Farrell, bad cess to him!"

"There, wife, didn't I tell you so? Where has he got her, woman?"

And the colonel's eyes flashed with rage as he seized the old hag by the shoulder.

"I'll advise ye not to be cross with me, sur," growled the old hag, shaking off the strong hand; "and I want ye to clap down a hundred guineas afore I answer ye another word about the young lady."

"A hundred guineas," gasped Colonel Johnson. "Do you think I'm mad, woman?"

"Do ye want to get yer daughter out of the young blackguard's power?"

"Certainly, woman; but—"

"Do ye want your son released from those who'll hang him to-morrow if ye hang any of the boys ye've caught?"

"You are making jest of me, you old witch," cried the colonel, impatiently. "I'll have you flogged through the town if you attempt to deceive me."

"And what do you suppose I ventured in here for?" replied the old hag, in bold tones. "I stole through yer sogers to come here and tell ye that it was in my power to set yer son and daughter free, and this is the thanks I get."

"You set them free!" cried the colonel. "What can an old wretch like you do against such fiends?"

"Give me a hundred guineas, and ye'll see, sir. Your son is a prisoner in yer own house, and I know a way to get him out, safe and sound, if—"

"But my daughter, good woman," cried Mrs. Johnson. "Where's my girl? That brave young man would not harm her."

"That brave young man," said the old hag, with a sneer, "is got her hiding where ye

can't find her. He's only waiting to sack this place to-morrow and get a lot of money, and then whip her off to France or America. Down with the hundred guineas and I'll save her for ye, as well as the young captain, to boot."

Colonel Johnson had been regarding the old creature intently for some moments, while he played with a pistol that was lying on the table before him.

Springing up suddenly, he seized the pistol, presented it at the old woman's head, and cried, in a loud voice, that could be heard by the guard outside:

"What treachery is this? Woman or devil, don't offer to move, or I'll send a bullet through your heart. Sergeant, bring in a file of men and arrest that scoundrel."

"Found out, be heavens!" cried the pretended old woman, as she flung aside the cape and hood that covered her ugly face. "Colonel, you're a cuter man than I took ye for."

"Villain, I know you now," yelled the enraged man, as he recognized the bold, cunning countenance of Spitfire Miles. "Seize the scoundrel, Sergeant Haywood. That's the wretch who stole my daughter."

"Right ye are, colonel," cried Miles, with a defiant smile. "And ye'll never lay eyes on her again if ye lay hands on me. Listen to me."

"Take the wretch out and hang him at once. No—no—one moment. See that you flog him within an inch of his life, sergeant, before you put the rope around his vile neck. He's a spy. He's the rascal who fought with that daring young rebel, called Fergus of the Flail."

"For mercy's sake, colonel," pleaded Mrs. Johnson, "allow him to tell us about our darling Rachel."

"Begor, but that's good advice, me lady," said Miles, with a sly wink at the anxious mother. "If ye don't let me tell about her, and show ye where she is at that, no human soul will ever set eyes on the darling again."

"Hold one moment, sergeant!" cried the colonel, as they were dragging Miles from the room. "Where is my daughter, you fiend of—"

"Hard words won't bring her to ye, colonel, agra," laughed the bold rascal. "I still stick to the hundred golden guineas."

"Take him down into the yard and flay the truth out of him, Haywood!" yelled the enraged officer. "Cut him to the bone until he tells the truth. Give him a hundred lashes, and see if that won't—"

"If ye cut me heart out, ye old fool," cried Miles, "ye couldn't make me open me lips to tell ye where she is. Kill me—ay, even lay the lash on me once, and yer daughter will starve to death where I've got her hiding."

"For mercy's sake—for our daughter's sake, husband," pleaded Mrs. Johnson, "listen to the young man. You know that you cannot terrify him. I'm certain he has our child in his power; oh, do treat with him, for our dear girl's sake!"

A treacherous smile passed over Colonel Johnson's face as he replied to his wife, in low tones:

"Yes, I will treat with him, but I'll hang him afterwards."

Miles did not hear the words, but he did see the treacherous smile, and he said to himself, as he assumed a terrified expression he did not feel:

"The colonel is going to offer me a chance for life. I'll have to play that I'm mortally frightened of the lash. But won't I be even with him in the long run. Let me but get the money, and then I'll whip the darling out of the country."

"Wait a moment, sergeant," cried Colonel Johnson, as he turned to the prisoner. "Aha, you scoundrel, you're afraid of the lash—are you? You didn't quail when the rope was on your neck, but you fear the cat-o'-nine-tails. Will you tell me the truth about my daughter, or take a hundred lashes?"

"I'm not afraid of death, colonel," answered Miles, in terrified tones, "but, for Heaven's sake, don't lash me poor bones! Give me the hundred guineas, and I'll set yer daughter free in less than two hours."

"You'll get the hundred lashes, you young hound. Down with him, sergeant, and fasten him on the triangle. We'll see if we can't loosen his tongue."

Whining in piteous tones, the rascal was dragged down to the yard and secured to the

dreaded triangle, the soldiers tearing the upper covering from his back.

Colonel Johnson stood by as Dick Haywood raised the lash to commence operations, and a grim smile was on his face as he looked at his victim, and cried:

"Will you tell me where my daughter has been taken, sirrah?"

"Give me the hundred guineas, and I'll do it, colonel."

"Flog the scoundrel, sergeant. Give it to him with a vengeance."

Down went the heavy lash; and Miles yelled with pain as the knotted cords cut to the bone, while he cried out:

"Spare me—spare me, and I'll—"

Before he could finish the sentence, another blow fell upon his bleeding back.

"Ha—ha! you infernal scoundrel!" cried the colonel, "that tames you. Lay on to him, sergeant. Don't spare the hound."

Miles clenched his teeth in agony, but he did not utter a single cry after receiving the second blow.

"'Tis more than I bargained for," thought the bold rascal; "but I'll grin and bear it. I'll murder that old villain for this, if he was my own father."

More than a dozen lashes had fallen on the naked back, and still not another cry escaped from the victim, when a woman stole into the yard and watched the proceedings with flashing eyes.

The strange woman wore a heavy cloak, the hood of which served to cover her face and her streaming white hair.

One glance at the victim's face, and the woman recognized Miles.

Giving vent to a suppressed cry of agony, she glided up to the colonel, laid her hand on his arm, and whispered into his ear, in thrilling tones:

"Let the butcher lash away, Colonel Johnson, for he is lashing your own flesh and blood."

The officer started on hearing the whispered voice, and then turned on the woman with glaring eyes, as he gasped forth:

"In Heaven's name, who are you, woman? Let me see your face."

"I'm the mother of that boy, you unnatural dog," returned the woman, "and you are his father. Lash him to death, for he deserves it. What a grand revenge for me."

"Good God!" gasped the officer. "'Tis Anne Desmond back from the grave."

"Back for vengeance, you scoundrel. Don't stop the butcher, if he is lashing your own son to death. You tried to kill his mother, and now you—"

"She devil, fiend!" cried the officer, as he seized the woman and drew her aside, "is that scamp your son?"

"He is—he is—he is!" was the excited reply, as the woman clapped her hands in seeming joy. "But don't spare the scamp, for he's as great a villain as his father. He tried to murder me, as you did long ago. Go on with the lashing."

Colonel Johnson pushed the excited creature aside in a rude manner, and sprang towards his writhing victim, crying:

"Hold—hold! Sergeant, cut the young man down! Set him free! 'Tis all a great mistake! Great God, I'm a wretch!"

And the half-distracted man staggered against the wall for support, while the soldiers hastened to release his victim from the triangle.

Neither the soldiers nor Miles heard one word of the conversation between the officer and the strange woman, and they were all surprised at the sudden turn the affair had taken at her intercession.

Without pausing to wipe the blood from his lacerated back, Miles flung on his upper garments, watching the excited colonel in the meanwhile with vengeful eyes.

Motioning the soldiers to stand aside, the colonel approached Miles, saying:

"What's your name, sir?"

"Find out," was the impudent reply.

"Don't be impertinent, sir, or I will chastise you again. Answer my questions, and I will give you the hundred guineas, as well as set you free."

"Do your worst, you merciless tyrant!" cried Miles, "and take that as a sample of what I'll give you before long."

As the daring fellow spoke the words, he stooped down and picked up the lash, and then struck the colonel a terrible cut across the face, ere the latter could spring back or ward off the attack.

With a yell of defiance, Miles dashed toward the gate near by, and he was out in the street ere the amazed soldiers made a movement against him.

"Seize the rascal!" cried the infuriated colonel, "but don't fire on him. Take him alive and bring him here. Don't injure him."

"I'll murder your daughter!" yelled back Miles, as he dashed toward the outskirts of the town. "I'll kill your son, and I'll settle with you in the battle to-morrow."

"Dick Haywood," cried Colonel Johnson, as he listened to the threats, "you are a brave fellow, I know. Will you earn a hundred guineas and a commission?"

"In a good cause, Colonel Johnson," replied the sergeant, "I will serve you to the death."

"Then follow that young man, in whatever disguise you may. He has my daughter in his power, and you must track him to his hiding-place. Rescue my child, take him prisoner, without injuring him, and I promise you a hundred pounds and a commission."

"I'll do it, colonel," replied the brave Englishman, "if it was only for the young lady's sake. I'll track him to his hiding-place, for I have a suspicion where it is, if I had to fight my way through the rebel army."

The strange woman who had watched the assault on the colonel with glaring eyes, now turned to her old lover, and laid her hand on his arm once more, as she spoke, in tones that could not be heard by those around:

"That lad will avenge me yet. Farewell, Colonel Johnson, until your hour of death."

And she ran out through the gate as the perplexed man leaned against the wall for support, muttering:

"My crime is punished. Good God, can that wretch by my son?"

CHAPTER XX.

FERGUS IN THE CAMP—MILES IN A NEW ROLE—IS IT TREACHERY?—THE LAST FIGHT OF OLD FOES—OLD FRIENDS STAND TOGETHER.

It was night in the camp of the patriot army, and Fergus of the Flail was stretched before a cabin that served as a shelter for some of his wearied companions.

The young man was thinking of his dead parents, of the coming battle, and of Rachel Johnson, while he did not forget his treacherous friend of other days, Miles Tracy.

"To think that the scoundrel should turn on me," muttered Fergus, "after all the pleasant days we spent together—after all the times I kept others from breaking his ugly head—the villain!"

"'Tis a pity ye didn't let them break it, Fergus," rejoined a well-known voice behind him, "and ye are welcome to do it at once, if ye like, and I won't raise a hand to save meself."

"Blood an' ouns," cried Fergus, as he seized his flail, and sprang to his feet on the instant. "Oh, you treacherous dog, but I'll pay you now. Say a prayer, for I'll kill you on the spot!"

Miles Tracy folded his arms on his breast, and looked his old friend full in the face, as he answered in a sad tone of voice:

"Strike away, Fergus, for I deserve death a hundred times over. But listen to me a moment, for the sake of old times—for the sake of the girl you love."

"Where is Miss Johnson, you infernal villain?" inquired Fergus, as he held the flail over Miles. "What have you done with her, you limb of the devil?"

"She's safe and sound, and watching for you, Fergus. Wait till I tell you where she is, and then kill me, if you want to."

"Where is she, you traitor?"

"Hiding in the vault of the old abbey. Will you listen to me, Fergus, before you offer to knock the life out of me?"

"What have you to say, you hound of the earth?" asked Fergus, impatiently. "You are up to more of your black tricks. Oh, how can I keep my hands off you?"

"I expect nothing less than death, my old friend; but I don't want to die until after to-morrow. If you will trust me to-night, I'll show you where your darling is, and I'll fight with you to-morrow. Oh, Fergus—Fergus, 'tis a change is over me. I could cut me heart out for turning on you. For the sake of the living and the dead, trust to me as I ask you."

Miles spoke so earnestly, as the tears fell down his cheeks, that Fergus was affected by his words and bearing, though he was still in

clined to think that the rascal was meditating another act of treachery.

"What has happened to you?" Fergus demanded, in stern tones.

"I was lashed like a dog to-night in the barracks at Ross. 'Twas a just punishment for turning on you, Fergus; but I've sworn to have the life-blood of the tyrant who had me flogged."

"Who was it?"

"Colonel Johnson."

"Aha!" exclaimed Fergus. "And you want me to help you to vengeance?"

"The very thing I want, Fergus. Give me a chance to meet him in the battle to-morrow, to stab him to the heart, and I'll not ask to live another hour."

"You say his daughter is in the old abbey—do you? Are you certain?"

"If you don't find her there you may strike me dead on the spot. Come with me at once and you'll see."

"Go on, then," returned Fergus. "Lead the way. If I see the least sign of treachery the bullet from this pistol will be sent into your false heart."

"I am satisfied, Fergus."

And Miles led the way out on the road towards the wood without offering to say another word to his old friend.

"The rascal may be leading me into a trap," muttered Fergus, as he followed on, "but I can't help feeling there's a change over him for the better. He seems like his old self again. I may be a fool, but I'll trust him, and his death be on his own head if he offers to betray me."

Though Miles Tracy had acted a villainous part, his old friend was so impressed with the truth of his assertions, as well as so confident in his own courage and strength, that he never once thought of calling on his friends in the camp for assistance.

As they strode through the woods towards the old abbey, Miles made a full confession of his rascality, and added:

"I don't ask you to forgive me, Fergus; but all I can say in excuse is that I doted on the girl myself for many a day. She turned me head completely when I had her before me on the horse; and the ould boy put it into me head to whip her off."

"And you found she wouldn't have you, you villain?" inquired Fergus.

"She'd die first. She dotes on you, Fergus, no doubt. Have her and welcome. I'll kill her father to-morrow. Here we are at the abbey now. Follow me, and blow me brains out if ye see any signs of treachery."

Miles led the way into the old abbey, and then down a flight of stone steps to the vault beneath.

"The scoundrel, to keep the darling creature down here," muttered Fergus, as Miles struck a light. "Can I ever forgive him?"

Miles unlocked a strong door and led the way into the vault, where the young girl was reclining on a couch made of dried leaves, and sleeping the sleep of the innocent.

"There she is for you, Fergus," said Miles, in sorrowful tones, "and may ye never be put asunder again."

At the sound of the rascal's voice, the young girl started up, and opening her eyes and staring around, exclaimed:

"Oh, you wicked wretch, why did you come back here again?"

"Don't be afraid, Miss Johnson," said Fergus, as he advanced to take her hand, "I will protect you now."

"You'll have enough to do to protect yourself, rebel," cried a loud voice at the door of the vault. "In on them, lads, and down with them. Remember you don't injure the ugly beast."

Fergus had barely time to grasp his flail and draw his pistol, when he was confronted by four stalwart men, all dressed as peasants in the patriot army, and each carrying a musket.

Fergus of the Flail held his pistol at the foremost intruder, as he cried:

"Who are you?"

"Friends to King George, and foes to all rebels!" replied the leader of the party. "Throw down your weapons, or we'll kill you where you stand!"

"Traitor—villain!" yelled Fergus, as he turned on Miles and struck him to the ground with a blow of the flail. "I'll have your life, if I died for it! Come on, you English dogs, and I'll show you how Fergus O'Farrell fights for his life. Don't fire, or you'll kill the young lady—your own colonel's daughter!"

"A fair fight it is, then, rebel!" cried Dick Haywood, as he advanced on Fergus with uplifted musket. "I fought you twice before."

"And I spared your life each time, English dog, when I could have taken it!" cried Fergus, in furious tones. "There are five of you to one now, and I dare you all to the encounter!"

The three others made a forward movement, but Dick Haywood cried:

"Back, I say. I will fight him man to man. Should he floor me again, I conjure you all to do the same. Have at you, brave rebel, for King George and Merry England."

"For Ireland and liberty!" cried Fergus, as he flourished the flail. "Death to all the foes of Erin!"

One flourish of that fatal flail, and the musket was dashed from Dick Haywood's hands.

Once more it flourished over the English soldier's head, and he was borne to the earth, never to rise again.

"You have finished me at last," groaned the dying man, "and in a fair fight. Comrades, show him fair play."

"Fergus—Fergus, I'll stand to you," cried Miles, springing to his feet, and seizing the fallen man's gun. "May God strike me dead if I brought them here."

"That's true," groaned Dick Haywood. "We tracked the fellow from Ross. He did not betray you, Irishman."

"Then stand to me, Miles," cried Fergus, "and we'll beat the four of them. Down with the murdering dogs!"

"Two of you at the time," groaned Dick Haywood, or I'll curse you with my dying breath, Englishmen. Avenge me, lads, for I'll never mount charger again."

And the brave fellow's head fell on the floor as the spirit left the body.

"Avenge Dick Haywood!" yelled one of his friends. "Charge together on the cursed rebels!"

"Come on, ye dogs!" cried Miles, as he struck at the foremost. "Fergus, me darling, I'll show ye that the black spirit has left me forever. I'll die for ye."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIGHT OF FOUR TO TWO—THE FRIENDS IN A TRAP—A DESPERATE DASH AND A FIGHT FOR LIFE—MILES HIMSELF AGAIN.

WHILE Fergus was encountering Dick Haywood, Rachel Johnson stood like one entranced, gazing at the combatants, and apparently powerless to move hands or feet.

The young girl made no effort to fly from the vault when Fergus struck his first opponent to the ground, for she fell on the rude bed, uttering a cry of joy as she witnessed the victory of her brave lover.

And then, as the four English soldiers advanced on Fergus and Miles, Rachel continued to watch the combat with anxious eyes, as she muttered to herself:

"God protect the brave young man, and bring him safe out of this unequal combat. Oh, you wretch, this is all your fault."

The last sentence was intended for Miles, who was at that moment engaged in a fierce struggle with two of the soldiers, while Fergus faced the others.

Though the soldiers' muskets were loaded, they did not think of firing at the two rebels, as they feared to shoot their colonel's daughter.

They had never met Fergus nor his companion before, and they had never felt the strength of the active, sinewy arm that now brandished the fatal flail.

To be sure, the soldiers had witnessed the defeat of one of the bravest men in the ranks at the hands of the stalwart rebel, but that feat did not dismay them.

They were two to one, and they were determined on avenging Dick Haywood's death by crushing the daring rebels.

There was plenty of room in the large vault to give Fergus and Miles full scope for active movements, and the ceiling was high enough to permit them to brandish their weapons at will.

The light in the lamp was still burning, throwing a bright glare over the scene, and it enabled the combatants to mark the movements of their opponents.

Standing together with their backs against the wall, so as to keep the soldiers from getting behind them, Fergus and Miles awaited their assault.

"At them together, lads!" cried the corporal

who succeeded Dick Haywood in command of the party. "Avenge our comrade, and kill the rebel dogs!"

"Come on, ye hounds!" cried Miles, as he thought of the bloody stripes on his back, "and we'll show ye how we'll floor ye the same way. Aha, ye pack of cowards, the dead man bade ye fight us man to man."

"We're not fools!" cried the corporal, as he advanced cautiously, holding his musket aloft with both hands. "At them together, lads, and kill them!"

"Kill us, indeed!" cried Fergus, with a mocking smile. "Fool of an Englishman, down you go!"

One sweep of the flail struck the musket from the vaunting corporal's hands, and before the man could retreat another blow stretched him prostrate beside his dead sergeant.

So quick were the movements of Fergus as he sprang aside to avoid the blow aimed at him by his other assailant that he was able to ward off a crushing effort aimed at Miles by one of his foes.

"Hurrah, me bould boy!" yelled Miles, as he struck the other soldier a terrible blow on the head. "We are man to man now, and won't we give it to them!"

The two soldiers who still remained uninjured, seeing their comrades stunned on the floor and their furious foes preparing for a final assault, retreated to the door, but still keeping their faces to the young rebels.

"See how the cowardly hounds cut for it," cried Miles. "Have at them, Fergus, or they'll escape—the thieves!"

"At them it is!" cried Fergus, springing at the retreating soldiers with uplifted flail. "Cowards, stand and face us like men! Oh, the hounds!"

The two soldiers did not await the attack, as they dashed out of the vault, closing the heavy door in the faces of their enemies.

Before Fergus or Miles could draw back to fling their bodies against the door, the soldiers pushed the bolt on the outside, while one of them yelled out:

"We have you now, you rebel dogs; you are caught like rats in a trap!"

"A hundred pounds for those who have caught them!" rang out a stern voice behind the soldiers. "Thank God, Richard, we were not too late. Where's Sergeant Haywood, sirrah?"

"The Lord help us, Fergus!" groaned Miles, as he heard that vengeful voice outside the door; "'tis Colonel Johnson, and we may be sure he has a lot of soldiers with him. And there's that devil of a son of his in the bargain."

"Hush, Miles, and listen," retorted Fergus, as his heart beat wildly. "Don't despair yet, man. Take those guns and see if they're loaded. We can die like heroes, at any rate. Hush!"

Colonel Johnson could hardly restrain himself when the soldiers informed him of what had happened in the vault.

When he dispatched Sergeant Haywood from the town in the evening, in order to track Miles to his hiding-place, the impatient officer could not restrain himself and await the upshot of the adventure.

His son was a prisoner in the hands of the rebels, and might be put to death at any moment, in retaliation for the outrages committed on the people.

His daughter was at the mercy of the bold, cunning rascal, whom he now believed to be his own flesh and blood.

Colonel Johnson had seen enough of Miles to know he would not stop at any crime, in order to be avenged on the man who had caused him to be lashed in the barrack yard; and he trembled for the safety of his daughter.

"If he is my son—if he has my blood in his veins," thought the unhappy officer, "he will not hesitate to murder Richard—to carry off Rachel. He is a desperate villain, and his mother is a she-devil. I must save my children."

As we have said before, Colonel Johnson was brave—brave even to rashness.

Selecting twenty-five of his brave troopers, he sallied out of Ross at the dead of the night, and by an unguarded path.

Taking a roundabout course, so as to avoid the rebels who were besieging the town, Colonel Johnson led the party to the wood at the back of his own mansion, and where his son was held a prisoner, guarded only by four rebels.

When the colonel ascertained, from a scout sent out for the purpose, that the party in

charge of the mansion was so weak, he ordered a charge on the place.

The four rebels retreated at the first appearance of the mounted men; and Colonel Johnson rescued his son without striking a blow or firing a shot.

Then the officer told his son of Miles and the flogging, and of his escape, swearing vengeance against them all; but he said nothing about the strange woman, or of her assertion that the young scamp was his own son.

Richard Johnson listened, with flashing eyes, and then broke out, saying:

"Father, you did wrong to punish that young man. He is my friend. With his assistance we could crush the rebels—crush the young dog, Fergus O'Farrell. Now you have made him an enemy. Believe me, he will not stop at anything to be avenged on us all."

"Then he has Rachel in his power?" inquired the colonel.

"He has; but I think we can rescue her. Come with me. I will lead you to his hiding-place."

And Richard told his father about the old abbey, asserting his belief that Miles had Rachel a prisoner there.

"Curse the young devil," muttered the baffled conspirator. "Why didn't he take Rachel away and kill her?"

And then Richard Johnson set his brain at work, in order to devise a plan for getting rid—and forever—of the girl who stood in the way of a great fortune.

"To-night, or never," he thought, as they rode through the wood toward the abbey, "I'll put her out of the way."

Colonel Johnson was ill at ease as he rode along with his son.

If his old sweetheart had told him the truth, he was about to fall on his own son, in order to save his daughter.

"If Sergeant Haywood has not killed him already," muttered the perplexed man, "I must endeavor to save him. I will send him out of the country."

When the party reached the old abbey, they heard the sounds of the conflict in the vault below; and the colonel hastened down, followed by his son and the troopers.

Then he learned that Fergus and Miles had defeated the five troopers, and that they were themselves prisoners in the vault.

"Ah—ha!" thought Colonel Johnson, "we will now kill that young rebel, Fergus O'Farrell, and I can save my son."

"I hope to God," muttered Richard Johnson, "that they'll resist to the last; and in the melee I will send a stray shot at that impudent girl."

And Fergus O'Farrell was determined to resist to the death.

He was appalled for the moment on hearing his bitter foe outside; but the next instant he recovered his native courage, and prepared for the worst.

Rachel Johnson was more terrified at the arrival of her father than either of the others, as she was well aware that the stern soldier would show no mercy to her lover.

Fortunately for the young man, the strong door had bolts on the inside also.

The moment Fergus recovered his composure, he slipped the iron bolts into their fastenings; and then, having secured the muskets from the fallen men, he retreated to where Rachel was crouching, saying, in a low voice:

"Miss Johnson, I am so sorry that you had to look on this bloodshed, and I fear now you must look on more."

"Is there no way of escape?" inquired Rachel, turning her loving eyes up to her lover.

"I fear not, Miss Johnson. Death threatens us now in earnest. I would to God you were safe out of this. If I fall in here—and only a miracle can save me—remember that I will die blessing you."

"You must not die," muttered the young girl, as she clasped her lover's hand. "Oh, Fergus—Fergus, you know I like you. Father must spare your life. Could you not escape somehow, and I will fly with you? I will follow you anywhere—to France, to America!"

"Heaven bless you for those words, my own darling," responded Fergus, as he bent down and kissed his sweetheart.

"Surrender, you rebel dogs!" yelled Colonel Johnson, from the outside. "Surrender, and release my daughter on the instant, or I will show you no mercy."

"We do not expect mercy from you, Colonel Johnson," cried Fergus. "We will fight

to the bitter end. Rely on it, you will not take us alive. Blow out that lamp, Miles, for we'll have a better chance in the dark."

"They have light out there, Fergus," replied Miles, as he peeped through a crevice in the old wall. "They are preparing to force in the door on us. What do you think of blazing away at them when they break in, and then dashing out at them. We may escape in the old ruin, you know."

"We'll try it, Miles."

"Take me with you, Fergus," muttered Rachel, in imploring tones. "I feel we will never meet again if we part to-night. Oh, don't kill father, if you can help it!"

"I'll cling to you to the death, my darling!" returned Fergus. "They are forcing the door, Miles, get ready. Fire right into the soldiers and then follow me. Stand aside there, one moment, my darling."

"Don't fire at them!" yelled Colonel Johnson, as they forced the door from its hinges. "In and take them prisoners. Don't harm my daughter on your lives!"

"Fire—quick—Miles!" cried Fergus, as he raised his musket.

Bang—bang—bang! went the three guns of the disabled soldiers.

Cries of agony burst from some of the assailants, as three of their number fell on the threshold of the vault.

Seizing Rachel in his left arm and lifting her to his shoulder, Fergus grasped his flail and dashed out at the soldiers, who were somewhat dismayed at their warm reception.

Striking right and left with the flail, and yelling defiance the while, Fergus forced his way through the troop, still holding his precious burden to his breast.

"Down with the scoundrel!" yelled Colonel Johnson, as he presented his sword at Fergus, "but don't injure my child. Spare that other lad."

"I won't spare you, you merciless tyrant," yelled Miles, who had followed Fergus, fighting gallantly. "Take that, and remember the barrack-yard. On—on, Fergus, and we are safe from the dogs."

Striking down Colonel Johnson's sword with the clubbed musket, Miles followed up with another blow on the officer's head.

He had the musket raised to strike again, when Rachel interposed, crying:

"Oh, Fergus—Fergus, don't let him kill poor father!"

"That will do, Miles," cried Fergus, as he kept striking away at the soldiers who opposed him, "get right along to the door."

"Take that, you scoundrel!" cried Richard Johnson, as he fired a pistol at Fergus.

The young man sprang aside at the moment, and the ball passed by, striking a soldier on the head.

That pistol was aimed at Rachel's heart.

"You scoundrel!" yelled Colonel Johnson, turning to his son, "did I not order that no shots be fired? Close in on them, cowards, and drag my daughter from that young hound!"

The "young hound" had reached the steps at the moment, driving back all who opposed him, while Miles was fighting at his side.

"Ha—ha—ha!" yelled Miles. "Master Richard Johnson fired that shot at his sister, colonel. She's in his way. He wants all the property. He offered me five hundred pounds to murder her."

"Liar—dog!" yelled Richard, as he drew another pistol and fired at Miles.

The ball struck the weapon in Miles' hands and then fell to the ground.

With a wild yell, the young scamp dashed at his half-brother and struck him on the head, felling him to the ground.

"That's one for vengeance," he yelled, as he dashed up the stairs after Fergus.

And the next moment they were both out in the abbey yard, with Colonel Johnson and the soldiers at their heels, while Fergus still bore Rachel in his arms.

"Pursue them—capture them!" yelled Colonel Johnson. "A fortune for the man who rescues my daughter!"

"Follow on—follow on, and to the devil we pitch ye!" yelled Miles, as he dashed in among the troopers' horses and seized two of them by the bridle, scattering the others through the yard in confusion at the same time. "Colonel Johnson, I swore to have yer heart's blood, and I'll keep me oath!"

Cursing and yelling, the soldiers dashed to secure their horses; while Fergus, placing Rachel before him on a stout animal, faced into the wood.

CHAPTER XXII.

ANOTHER FLIGHT THROUGH THE WOOD—MILES AGAIN IN TROUBLE—HIS TERRIBLE DEFIANCE—THE HUNT IN THE BUSHES—FERGUS AT BAY, AND MILES TO THE RESCUE.

ON through the wood, facing towards the rebel camp at Ross, rode Fergus and his sweetheart, while Miles followed a short distance behind them.

On after them thundered Colonel Johnson and the troopers, without uttering a cry, lest they should attract the attention of the roving rebel bands.

"That was a fight in airnest, my brave Fergus," said Miles, as he drew up to the side of his friend.

"And I'm afraid 'tisn't all over yet," said Fergus, as he listened to the galloping steeds behind them.

"We'll give them the slip, Fergus. If we don't, and I'm killed, I want ye to say ye forgive me for my tricks."

"Tisn't I'm to forgive you, but this darling before me, Miles. What devilment ever came in your head to do such rascally work?"

"'Twas the ould boy timpted me for certain, Fergus," returned the penitent. "Oh, Miss Johnson—Miss Johnson, I was mad intirely. Won't you forgive me? and I'll be your slave forever!"

"You fought like a hero for Fergus," returned the fond girl, "and I do forgive you with all my heart. Is it true that my brother offered you five hundred pounds to kill me?"

"As true as I'm riding through this wood, Miss Johnson. The villain tried to shoot you twice this night."

"I'll kill him!" cried Fergus. "Oh, what a born villain! My darling, you mustn't go near your father while he's with him. Even your mother couldn't protect you from such a hound."

"My dear mother," sobbed Rachel. "If it was not for her I would not care to go home at all. What's the matter, Fergus?"

"They are gaining on us, my darling. The double load is too much for the horse."

"Then let the young lady take mine," cried Miles. "Quick and away with you before they're on us."

"And leave you to be butchered, Miles?" returned Fergus. "Oh, that would never do at all after—"

"Can't I hide in the wood? Can't I run as fast as the horses if I'm put to it? Put the young lady on here, I say, my brave fellow, and save your life."

"They will catch us," replied Fergus, who was unwilling to sacrifice his old friend at such a time.

"They will catch you! They are gaining on us at every gallop," cried Miles. "For Heaven's sake, Fergus, remember what you will lose if they catch you."

"If we must, so be it," replied Fergus, as he pulled up and sprang from his horse to lift Rachel on the other animal. "Into the bushes with you, Miles. They are tearing after us like mad."

Miles ran along with the mounted fugitives for more than twenty yards, as he said to his old friend:

"If you never see me again, forget that I ever turned on ye, Fergus."

"I will—I will. Into the bushes with you, so that we can put the horses to their best."

"Put them to their best, and I'll keep up," returned Miles. "I want to give you a parting word, Fergus."

"What is it, Miles?"

"When you get to the camp, make Father Murphy marry ye at once."

"Marry us at once, Miles? you are mad, man. Do you—"

"Do as I tell ye, or you'll be sorry for it," interrupted Miles. "If the young lady ever gets into her brother's clutches he'll murder her—mind me."

"I'll murder him. They're on us Miles, go and hide."

"Curse that lame staggeen," cried the now devoted fellow, as he saw that the horse on which Rachel rode was faltering at every step. "Oh, if I had only time to take the black hunter."

At that instant the animal stumbled and then fell on his knees, and Rachel would have been flung over his head, had not Miles sprang to seize her.

"They're on us—they're on us!" cried Fergus, as the tramping sounded nearer and nearer behind them. "Let us into the bushes

and hide, my darling. I can die defending my life, if needs be."

"Give me your cloak and hat, Miss Rachel," said Miles, as he sprang on the sound horse. "I'll ride on as fast as I can, to mislead them, while you slip into the bushes there. Away with you."

Fergus and Rachel had barely time to creep into the dense bushes, when along thundered Colonel Johnson and the troopers.

"There goes my daughter!" yelled the officer, as he caught sight of Miles, wearing the white bonnet and cloak. "The wretches have maimed one of the horses. Ride after my girl and bring her back here, two of you. The scoundrels must be hiding hereabouts. Out with your swords and examine the bushes!"

"Mercy on us!" whispered Rachel, into her lover's ear, as they sat crouching in the bushes, "we are lost if they find us. Oh, what will you do, Fergus?"

"Fight to the death, my darling. They'll never take me alive, to hang me, as they did my father."

"Wouldn't it be better for me to go out and speak to father—to tell him the truth of how I care for you?"

"He'd hang me all the quicker, then, my darling. What's that? Confound the luck—they've caught poor Miles."

It was confounded bad luck, for the two troopers had caught Miles, and they were now leading him back a prisoner, with the bonnet on his head, and the cloak over his body.

"This is not your daughter at all, Colonel Johnson," said one of the captors, as he dragged Miles before the officer. "'Tis that rascal we flogged in the barrack yard to-day."

"My black curse on that other stumbling nag!" cried Miles, as he faced his father. "If he hadn't flung me on the road, I'd break your heads afore ye took me. My dark, bitter curse on ye, Colonel Johnson. And now, hang me, if ye like, but ye'll never see yer daughter again."

Colonel Johnson turned to the bold fellow, and his brow was as dark as midnight, as he cried:

"You rascal, you deserve death. But tell me where your companion is hiding with my daughter, and I'll set you free."

"Your daughter will be Fergus O'Farrell's wife before an hour," cried Miles. "Ha, ha, ha, won't that be grand? I hope I killed your blackguard of a son. I'm sorry I didn't kill you, you butcher of the world."

"Let me have your pistol, father, till I blow the scoundrel's brains out!" cried Richard Johnson, who had ridden up to where they were standing, with a handkerchief bound around his bleeding head.

"No—no—no!" thundered the colonel, as he motioned Miles' captors to take him away. "Take him out of my sight, but guard him well. Search well for my daughter and that other scoundrel. They cannot be far away from here."

"They have passed into the bushes, this way," cried Richard Johnson, as he noticed a white object on one of the shrubs near by. "Here's Rachel's handkerchief."

"In after them, all of you!" cried Colonel Johnson, springing from his horse and drawing his pistol and sword. "The wretch must not escape us this time. Beware, all of you, and do not harm my daughter. Richard, you remain here; you are too free with your pistols."

"My father suspects me," muttered the treacherous man, as he ground his teeth in rage.

About fifteen of the troopers were now beating the bushes on all sides, prodding with their bayonets as they forced their way through the briars and brushwood.

More than once some of the men approached the spot where Fergus and his sweetheart lay concealed, and Fergus was several times on the point of springing out, flail in hand, to confront his foes, when Rachel would keep him back with a whisper, saying:

"They'll not find us, Fergus. Oh, you could not fight them all again. They would shoot you down before my eyes."

In the meantime, Miles was cursing and foaming and watching an opportunity to escape from his captors, with the purpose of creating a diversion in favor of the lovers.

"Why the devil do ye be squeezing me bones to powder," he cried, "holding me that fast? Ease yer grip and I'll stand as quiet as a milking cow."

"I'll run this sword through you if you

don't keep still," returned the trooper. "You can't play any tricks on us."

"If I had a living show I'd bate the life out of the pair of ye," Miles retorted. "Oh, but ye're the purty pair, so ye are. The crows in the trees above are laughing at ye."

"We'll make you cry if you don't stop your infernal nonsense," said the other trooper.

"They've got the other fellow, lad!" cried the second trooper, as a cry of triumph burst from the bushes. "We'll hang them both on the same tree."

"By heavens, but ye'll never live to see the hanging!" yelled Miles, as he seized the soldier's sword and tore it from his grasp, breaking away from them at the same time.

Quick as a rifle flash Miles turned on his unarmed captor and plunged the weapon into his breast.

Then, before the other soldier could put up his weapon to ward off the blow, he struck him across the face with the sharp edge of the weapon.

"Take that for ye," yelled Miles, as he saw his late captors stretched on the ground groaning in agony. "And now, Fergus, my darling boy, to fight for ye and to die for ye, if needs be."

Dashing into the bushes, Miles yelled out at the top of his voice:

"Stand to them, Fergus, and don't give up the darling—I'm coming to help ye!"

And Fergus did need help at the moment, for he was standing at bay against a tree, Rachel kneeling before him, while her father and the troopers were about to spring in and crush him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FERGUS FIGHTS HIS ENEMIES AGAIN—THE ESCAPE FROM THE WOOD—THE BATTLE OF ENNISCORTHY.

WHILE the soldiers were hunting for Fergus O'Farrell and the young girl in the dense bushes, Richard Johnson, pistol in hand, crept along in search of them, and after him strode two soldiers.

Walking directly to the spot where the fugitives lay concealed, the cruel brother soon detected his sister, and he was in the act of firing at her, when Fergus sprang out with his flail and struck the weapon from the would-be murderer's hand.

The two soldiers sprang on Fergus, while Rachel cried out for mercy for her lover.

The young patriot swept all before him with his flail, knocking the two soldiers down; and then seizing Rachel's arm, he retreated to a tree, while at least a dozen enemies crouched to attack him on all sides.

Colonel Johnson rushed to the attack with his sword raised, when he beheld his daughter, with hands uplifted, kneeling before the gallant young patriot, as she cried:

"Oh, father—father, don't kill him! I love him—I love him!"

"In on the scoundrel, men!" cried the angry man. "Rachel—Rachel, you are mad!"

They sprang in on Fergus, only to fall back again before the furious flail.

At that moment, and with a wild yell, Miles Tracy dashed in among the soldiers.

Seizing a musket from one of the fallen men, he struck Colonel Johnson on the head, crying:

"Take that for lashing me! Cut for it, Fergus, for we're not able for them. Away with you, Miss Johnson!"

Rachel only needed the hint to fly with her lover.

While the demoralized soldiers crowded around their fallen officer, she sprang behind the trees, crying to her lover:

"Fly with me, Fergus! Get on the horses, and away with us!"

A few of the soldiers attempted to stop the fugitives, but the flail in the hands of Fergus, and Miles' musket, stretched them on the ground.

Rushing together for the horses, Fergus placed the young girl on her father's animal, while he seized her brother's charger almost at the same time.

Before the soldiers could rally, Fergus and Miles, with Rachel between them, were dashing towards the rebel camp, leaving the discomfited soldiers gathered around the colonel.

The two young rebels reached the camp in safety; while the disappointed troopers found their way back to Ross.

On the following morning, Colonel Johnson, who commanded the English forces, retreated

to the town of Enniscorthy, and the rebels followed them.

And then ensued one of the fiercest battles ever waged for land and life.

Father Murphy commanded the Irish forces, and Colonel Johnson, with six thousand English veterans, defended the town of Enniscorthy.

After defeating the English at Oulort Hill, the patriot priest drove the English from Ferns, and then pushed on Enniscorthy.

Having collected all the arms possible, this gallant soldier was determined on trying the bravery of the peasants as against the English hirelings.

Couriers were then sent all over the country, commanding every able-bodied man to march at once to the aid of his countrymen, with such arms as he could procure; and this had such an effect that a force of over seven thousand men were soon under the command of the reverend general. With these he determined to attack Enniscorthy.

This town is built on both sides of the Slaney river, the principal portion being on the west, by which side the patriots were approaching. It was strongly garrisoned by part of the North Cork militia, under Captain Snowe; the Shilmalier infantry, commanded by the Right Honorable George Ogle; two more infantry corps, commanded by Captains Cornock and Pounden; and the Enniscorthy cavalry, under command of Captain Richard, besides a considerable number of supernumeraries who had fled from the surrounding district for protection. To all these must be added the loyal inhabitants of the town who offered their services for the defense, so it will be seen that the task of the brave priest was a most difficult one, only to be accomplished with his undisciplined and badly armed force by the most indomitable bravery and no small amount of military tact.

Thus prepared for the expected assault the garrison at Enniscorthy awaited the advance of their dreaded foes. The latter had crossed the Slaney by the Scarawalsh Bridge, and halting for a short time on the hill of Ballyoril, situated three miles northwest of the town, to rest and concentrate their forces, they advanced by two converging roads which met just outside the town near what was called the Duffrey Gate.

Here the yeoman under Captain Pounden were posted, supported by the cavalry under Captain Richards.

The North Cork, under Snowe, were stationed on the bridge connecting both sides of the town, the rest of the troops were placed in the most available positions for defense, while the loyal inhabitants and the refugees of the country (who expected nothing but death should the place be taken) manned the houses that commanded the approaches, and subsequently defended them with desperate bravery.

The patriot advance consisted of two hundred picked men, composed of good marksmen in the center, and pikemen on either bank.

This body advancing steadily on the Duffrey Gate, were twice charged by the Enniscorthy cavalry along the two roads above mentioned; but the marksmen, taking shelter in the ditches, opened a galling fire on their assailants, while the brave pikemen withstood their attack, and soon sent them back faster than they came.

The main column now advanced, and some young cattle being brought from the rear, were driven furiously before the pikemen on the astonished infantry who defended the Duffrey Gate, and whose tactics afforded them no defense against such a novel charge, followed up as it was by the bristling ranks of pikemen, who, with a shout and a rush, swept the gate, and poured like a torrent through the streets, under an incessant stream of fire from the houses, which galled them exceedingly.

These, however, were soon stormed and several of them set on fire; being chiefly thatched, they blazed furiously, and under cover of the dense smoke the British retreated to the market-house, where they made a stand; but they were finally driven back, and concentrated on the bridge, a desultory fight ranging through the streets on all sides, fires bursting out momentarily, so that soon half the town was in a blaze.

The bridge, however, was still held by the soldiers.

But one division of the patriots, headed by an old farmer named Thomas Sinnot, wading

across the Slaney at Blackstoops, above the town, proceeded to take a position on Vinegar Hill, on its eastern side.

On observing the success of this movement, which enabled the patriots to attack the town on all sides, the military, fearful of being surrounded, hastily sounded a retreat from the bridge, and fled in the utmost confusion and disorder along the road to Wexford, officers tearing off their epaulets to escape recognition, and the whole loyal population that could escape helping to increase the confusion of that dreadful rout.

Before their retreat, however, an ineffectual attempt was made to murder the inoffensive prisoners, who had, for some days before the insurrection broke out, been confined in the old castle of Enniscorthy; but the keeper, having run off to Wexford, and taken the key with him, the cowards, after a futile attack on the door, were forced to follow his example to save their own lives.

The patriots had marched from Carrig-rue at seven o'clock in the morning; it was now now nearly six in the evening, and they had been four hours fighting without any food the whole day. They were therefore too much exhausted to pursue the retreating forces, otherwise the greatest part of them would have been killed or captured.

The number of killed was about equal on both sides. The military lost above a hundred at the Duffrey Gate, with several officers. Among the latter were Captain Pounden, of the Enniscorthy infantry, Lieutenant Hunt, of the yeomanry cavalry, and Lieutenant Corden, of the Scarawalsh infantry.

The fight at the gate was terrific. A Captain Drury, who was present, and who had served in the American war, declared that he had never experienced a heavier or better directed fire than that of the insurgents at this spot.

All through the fight, Fergus and Miles fought side by side, the former seeking Richard Johnson in the fray, and Miles was on the lookout for the man who had flogged him at Ross.

When the English retreated from the town, Colonel Johnson was the last to retreat, and Fergus and Miles were in close pursuit.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RIDING IN PURSUIT—FERGUS AND MILES WITNESS A THRILLING SCENE—THE ATTACK IN THE WOOD—COLONEL JOHNSON CONFRONTED—MILES HEARS FEARFUL TIDINGS.

FIGHTING side by side, during the fierce attack on Enniscorthy, Fergus and Miles, with a band of fifty patriots, still pursued the flying English in their retreat.

During the battle Miles sought Colonel Johnson at all points, as he was full bent on revenge for that cruel lashing in the barrack yard at Ross, but he failed to reach him, as the English commander, while directing the defense, did not personally engage in the battle.

And now that the retreat was sounded, Miles was one of the first in the fierce pursuit, and still thirsting for vengeance against his enemy.

Fergus O'Farrell was conspicuous throughout the onslaught, leading on his gallant band where the defense was most stubborn, and dealing death and crushing blows with his fatal flail.

The young chief kept Miles near him throughout the struggle, for he knew that the revengeful fellow was determined on killing Colonel Johnson.

Fergus would not deplore the English officer's death, should he fall by a stray bullet, for he had no love for Rachel's father; but he did not care to see him fall by the hand of his wayward friend.

Ever thinking of Rachel, and hoping to reach her during the fight, Fergus pressed on with the foremost.

But Colonel Johnson, when he saw the battle going against him, sent his wife and daughter away from the town under a strong guard commanded by his treacherous son, Captain Johnson.

The gallant English officer little dreamed that he was placing those he loved in the power of one who hated them, and who was only waiting an opportunity to put them out of his way forever.

From a prisoner taken near the English headquarters Fergus learned that Rachel was in charge of her cruel brother.

With the purpose of saving her at all hazards, the young chief pushed on in pursuit, his mind a prey to bitter forebodings as he realized the danger to which Rachel was exposed while in charge of her half-brother.

And thus, while Miles Tracy was dashing on for vengeance, Fergus was incited to rescue the girl he loved.

Colonel Johnson was one of the last to retreat from the battle-field of Enniscorthy, and then he had not more than a dozen troopers to guard him.

Riding hard for six miles, he found a party of twenty troopers, who were resting in a wood after the fatigues of the day.

With this addition to his force, the brave officer felt safe against any straggling band of patriots he might chance to encounter, and he ordered a halt in the wood.

Riding side by side, and with fifty good men and true close behind them, Fergus and Miles dashed along the road after Colonel Johnson and his troop.

"Miles—Miles," cried Fergus, as they neared the wood where their foes were concealed; "I'd give my right hand to know where the villain has taken Rachel."

"I'd give a good deal myself, Fergus," responded Miles; "and I think I'd be willing to die at once if I could only see her rascal of a father lying dead before me!"

"'Twas cruel to lash you, Miles, but you know they served others worse. Just think of their hanging my poor father, who never injured a soul in his life! Oh, but we had our revenge to-day!"

"I'm not half satisfied," growled Miles, as he glared around. "Halt, my brave fellow, and look at those tracks. Some of them rode into that wood."

"God send 'tis Captain Johnson with Rachel!" cried Fergus, as he called on his party to halt.

"May the devil send 'tis her father!" growled Miles, as he clenched his teeth and grasped his pike. "Let me steal in and see where they are."

"Go on, Miles," ordered Fergus; "but don't offer to attack them until you come back for us. Wait, man, and I'll go with you."

Miles was pushing into the wood at the word of command, when Fergus, who feared the rascal's impetuosity should he discover his enemy, joined him.

Pushing silently through the wood, and following the track left by the troopers' horses, the two friends were soon on the colonel and his party, who were reclining on the ground, little dreaming of the foes who were on them.

"There's the villain!" hissed Miles into Fergus' ear. "Oh, how my blood boils to be at him. I could send this pike into his heart from here."

"And miss him to raise the alarm, so that they could all make off on their horses," remonstrated Fergus. "Don't be a fool, man; but come back, and we'll bring all the boys to the attack."

"Go back yourself, in God's name, Fergus," pleaded Miles, "and let me stay here to watch them. I'll not let him out of my sight until I sink this pike into his black heart."

"For God's sake, Miles, be careful," said Fergus, as he turned away. "Great God, what cry is that?"

A terrified scream burst on them at the moment, as out from the trees and out into the clearing where the troopers were resting dashed a female form.

It was now Miles' turn to keep Fergus in check, for the excited fellow recognized the form at once.

It was Rachel Johnson.

Colonel Johnson heard that cry, and he was up at once, sword in hand, while Miles held Fergus, by main force, from dashing out on the scene.

"Oh, father—father," screamed Rachel, as she flung herself into the outstretched arms, "save me from the wretch!"

"What wretch, Rachel?" inquired Colonel Johnson. "Who is pursuing you?"

"Richard—your son, Richard—father. There he is now. Oh, father, don't let him murder me."

Richard Johnson appeared at the edge of the clearing at the moment.

A fiendish expression was on his face, and he held a naked sword in his hand.

On seeing his father and the troopers, the scoundrel drew back for a moment; and then, assuming an air of innocence, he boldly advanced towards the colonel.

"What is the meaning of this outrage, sir?" demanded his father.

"It means, sir," was the brazen reply of the cunning wretch, "that Rachel was running away—trying to escape back to Enniscorthy to her rebel lover—and—"

"Oh, father, 'tis a base falsehood. Richard was plotting to murder me, and I fled from the wretch. Mother will tell you, if he has not killed her."

"A likely story, indeed," sneered the unabashed wretch. "Father, if you don't want that miserable girl to disgrace you, send her away to England at once. Do you dare deny that you love the scoundrel known as Fergus of the Flail?"

Before the young girl could reply, a warlike shout rang out through the wood, and the fifty rebels, led on by Fergus and Miles, dashed in on the troopers.

Striking down the startled troopers who opposed them, Fergus and Miles rushed on Colonel Johnson and his son.

"Surrender, Colonel Johnson," cried Fergus, "and I will spare your life."

"Never—never!" cried the officer. "Rally, soldiers, rally! Rachel, stand aside—run into the wood."

"Down with the tyrant!" yelled Miles, as he struck Captain Johnson to the ground, and then made a dash at the colonel.

"Fergus—Fergus!" cried Rachel, in imploring tones, "in mercy save my father."

"Back—back, Miles!" cried Fergus, striking down the revengeful fellow's pike with his flail. "Surrender, colonel, for I do not want to kill you."

"Never, you dog!" cried Colonel Johnson, as he made a lunge at Fergus with his sword. "Rally, men, rally, and charge home on the hounds! Oh, you poltroons, do not surrender like curs."

But the troopers, completely surprised and outnumbered, did not heed his appeal.

A few of them escaped into the wood, leaving their companions prisoners.

Fergus sprang aside to avoid the lunge made at him by the desperate colonel, and then, with one sweep of his flail, he struck the sword from his enemy's grasp.

"Now I have you, you villain," yelled Miles, as he rushed on the unarmed man with his pike. "Fergus, don't hinder me from killing him. He didn't lash you, man. You can't stop me. The devil himself couldn't stop me from killing the dog."

Placing himself in front of Colonel Johnson, Fergus faced Miles with flashing eyes and uplifted flail, as he cried:

"Stand back, I say, or I'll brain you on the spot. I am in command here, and I must be obeyed. We must not disgrace ourselves by killing unarmed men. Drag him away, boys."

Half a dozen men sprang in on Miles and disarmed him.

While they were dragging him away, the revengeful man turned, and shaking his clenched hand at Colonel Johnson, cried:

"My black curse be on you; and you will not escape me. I'll follow you to hell, if need be, but I'll have your life."

Fergus turned to his old enemy, saying:

"You see 'tis madness to resist, sir. Will you surrender to me, and I'll promise you my protection?"

"I cannot help myself, you dog," cried the angry man. "But think not that you can win my daughter. I will kill her with my own hand ere I will permit her to wed a cursed rebel."

"Oh, father you are cruel!" cried Rachel; "after he has saved your life."

"Would to go God I had perished in the fight to-day," groaned the unhappy man, as he thought of the strange woman's announcement in the barrack yard at Ross. "Oh, God, to think my own should turn against me in this way."

"'Tis a just vengeance," cried a loud voice from the trees. "You lashed your own flesh and blood at Ross."

"That woman again," groaned the unhappy man, as the strange creature strode out on the scene, leading Mrs. Johnson by the hand.

"Ay, that woman will haunt you to her dying day, Colonel Johnson—my husband that was. I am sorry your son—our son, and the rightful heir to your name and estate—didn't kill you to-day, for you deserve it."

The man held down his head and groaned in anguish, as Mrs. Johnson, laying her hand on his arm, said:

"I know the whole truth, Colonel John-

son, and I know that I am not your lawful wife."

"'Tis a base lie!" cried the desperate man, as he glared at the strange woman.

"'Tis the truth, as I can testify!" cried a stern voice, as Father Murphy strode out on the scene. "Do you dare tell me, sir, that I did not join you in marriage to this poor woman here? Where is the lad known as Miles Tracy? I heard his voice a few moments ago."

"Here I am, Father Murphy," he said, as he broke away from the guards and rushed forward.

"Stand back, all of you, men," commanded Father Murphy, "and look to your prisoners; you remain here, Fergus. Miles Tracy, you swore to kill Colonel Johnson?"

"I did that, father, and I hope I'll have your blessing in the act."

"You'll have my curse, and God's curse, you villain," said the priest in solemn tones, "if you attempt such a thing! Do you know who you are, sirrah?"

"I don't know, father, and don't care, not making you a short answer. That woman there told me she was my mother, but I didn't believe her."

"She is your mother, sir," said the priest, "and you may be proud of her, for she has watched you from the cradle up, when you little thought it."

"Begor, father, 'twas very good of her," said the bold rascal with a smile, as he made a bow to the strange woman. "Perhaps you'll be telling me next who my father is, and that he watched me also."

"Your father did not watch you, sir, for he did not know that you were in the world at all."

"Small blame to him then, Father Murphy," said Mike, "but will you be pleased to tell me who he was at all?"

"There he stands, sir," said the priest, pointing to the distressed colonel, who stood like one bewildered, with his head on his breast.

"In God's name," cried Miles, appealing to the priest in heart-rending tones, "don't tell me that man is my father. Oh, don't tell me that, Father Murphy, after him lashing me, as he would a dog, and after me swearing a solemn oath to have his heart's blood!"

"Colonel Johnson is your father, sir," continued the priest, "and there stands his lawful wife, as I know full well; you are heir to his name and estate."

"Heir to name and estate," fairly groaned Miles.

And then, holding himself aloft, he turned to his mother, gave her his hand, and sobbed forth:

"May God forgive me for what I did to you and Rachel there, and my darling Fergus. I don't want to hear any more of your sad story, for sad it must be. May God send a happier life to you all in days to come. Good-by—and forever!"

"Where are you going, Miles?" cried Fergus, as he seized his old friend in the act of moving away from the spot.

"Where am I going, Fergus? I'm going to join the brave Captain Dwyer on the Wicklow Mountains. I'm going to court death in fighting for Ireland, for I don't want to live, now that I know I have his blood in my veins."

And Spitfire Miles dashed away into the wood, sobbing the while as if his heart was breaking.

"May God pity him," said Father Murphy, "for he wasn't all to blame. Colonel Johnson, you are my prisoner. Let us all return to Enniscorthy. We have shown you to-day how Irishmen can fight for land and life. May God raise the people of all the country to follow our example!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE STORY OF THE STRANGE WOMAN—THE FORTUNES OF OUR HERO.

FERGUS O'FARRELL escorted Rachel and her mother back to Enniscorthy, while Father Murphy took charge of Colonel Johnson and the other prisoners.

Richard Johnson never arose from the spot alive, as he was slain by his half-brother.

The ladies were sent, in charge of Fergus, to a house in Enniscorthy; and then, on the following day, the young man heard the sad story of the strange woman.

It was the old, old story, of man's treachery to woman, and of woman's forbearance to the man she loved.

Miles' mother was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer in Wicklow, and she was dearly beloved by Michael Dwyer, who afterward was the leader of the Wicklow Mountain insurgents.

One day—an unhappy day for her—she met Colonel Johnson, who was out with a hunting party from Dublin.

He was then a young widower, having just buried Richard's mother.

The dashing soldier soon won the affection of the simple country girl, and, finding that he could not dishonor her, he took her to Wexford, where they were married by Father Murphy.

Not daring to take his unpretending bride to Dublin, to present her to his aristocratic friends, he placed her in the hunting-lodge on the mountain, where Fergus afterward fought with the troops.

Soon growing tired of his rustic beauty, the dashing officer returned to gay Dublin, where he soon met Rachel's mother, who was a great belle, as well as a rich heiress.

Forgetting the poor girl who was pining for him in the hunting-lodge, the treacherous villain wooed and won the heiress.

They started off on the continent together, and did not return for a year.

When they did return, the country girl learned, for the first time, of the second marriage, and she immediately sought her false husband.

Colonel Johnson turned his back on his lawful wife, told her that the marriage was not a legal one, and offered to support herself and child.

Repelling the offer, the poor creature fled from the place, bearing the child with her.

Seeking shelter that night at Farmer O'Farrell's house, she was impressed with their kindness, and she resolved on leaving her helpless child with the good-natured people.

But she could not tear herself away from the neighborhood, as she was devotedly attached to her son.

While wandering about the wood, she reached the old abbey, finding shelter there on the following night.

Seeking Father Murphy, she told the good priest the story, and he advised her to return to her people, asserting that it would be impossible, according to the English law, to force Colonel Johnson to own her as his wife.

She did not go back to her people, but lingered in the neighborhood, disguising herself as an old woman, and actually getting employment at Johnson Hall.

While living there, she became very much attached to Mrs. Johnson and Rachel; and she was also enabled to see her son, who was known as Miles Tracy.

And thus it came about that she was on hand to save Fergus, Dwyer, and her son, when death threatened them at Johnson Hall.

During the remainder of that glorious campaign in Wexford, Fergus O'Farrell fought gallantly against the English armies sent to crush the patriots.

It is a matter of historic record that it required thirty thousand English troops to crush that one Irish county; and it is also recorded, to the shame of the people of the other thirty-one counties, that no assistance was offered the gallant men of Wexford, save that afforded by the Wicklow Mountain men.

When the rebellion was crushed, Fergus O'Farrell crossed over to France, and joined the army under the great Napoleon.

On a certain happy day in Paris, a marriage ceremony was performed, and Fergus, then a captain in the French service, led Rachel from the altar.

Miles Tracy met the death he sought in the Wicklow mountains, and his father fell at the battle of Vinegar Hill.

Miles' mother lived with Mrs. Johnson for years after, and ended her days in a French town, where Fergus and Rachel were sojourning.

Fergus O'Farrell never returned to Ireland, for he would not live under English rule.

He won honor and fame, as did many of his countrymen, in the service of France, and his descendants are flourishing there to-day.

Michael Dwyer was the last chief to uphold Ireland's flag on his native mountains; and he fought there for years after, and even until the glorious Emmet raised the standard of revolt in Dublin.

And the day will come again—and God send it soon—when other valiant souls will raise the green flag on the hills of Ireland, and fight to victory for LIFE AND LAND.

[THE END.]

CORP. MORGAN RATTLER, the author of this story, is also the author of the following stories published in THE 5 CENT WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY: No. 1008, "Gerald O'Grady's Grit; or, The Branded Irish Lad." No. 904, "Dick Get-away; or, Fighting For a Fortune." No. 870, "Garry the Greenhorn; or, From Stowaway to Senator." No. 853, "Jerry the Tumbler; or, The Wonder of the Ring." No. 833, "Paddy Miles' Luck; or, The Irish Boy Miner."

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